

Hindu, Sufi, or Sikh

Contested Practices and Identifications of Sindhi Hindus in India and Beyond

Steven W. Ramey

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To Terra Ann Rodgers, whose love and support throughout my work has made everything possible

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Notes on Quotations, Foreign Terms, and Transliterations

Although many interviewees were more comfortable speaking in English, some of the interviews and newspaper articles that I gathered in Lucknow were in Hindi. When I quote from a Hindi source, the quotes appear in italics and are transliterated according to the 1997 edition of the Library of Congress Romanization Tables for Hindi. The translations of these quotes appear in parentheses, while authorial insertions in English quotes appear in square brackets. Non-English terms outside of the quotes are also italicized, with their meanings in parentheses at their first appearance, but I have omitted the diacritical marks for these terms to simplify the text. Proper nouns in Hindi are not italicized outside of the Hindi quotes. A Glossary of Foreign Terms after the Conclusion can assist those unfamiliar with these terms.

To aid in the pronunciation of the transliterated Hindi, a few general principles will help. Most consonants in this transliteration system reflect broadly familiar sounds, with a few exceptions, such as "*th*," which designates an aspirated "t," not a "th" sound, and "*ś*," which designates a "sh" sound. Several transliterated vowels that appear frequently have a particular pronunciation that differs from English. These are as follows:

a pronounced as the "u" in cup,
ā pronounced as the "a" in father,
e pronounced as the "a" in cake, and
ī pronounced as the "e" in be.

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Introduction: Differing Understandings

A disciple of a Muslim Sufi advised a community of Hindus in Lucknow, India, to install the Guru Granth Sahib, a text that is central for Sikhs, in their community center. Rather than seeing the installation of a text commonly associated with Sikhism in their Hindu institution as problematic, this community followed his suggestion, enshrining the Guru Granth Sahib under a canopy, much like the text is enshrined in Sikh *gurdwaras* (institutions housing the Guru Granth Sahib). They even placed a picture of Guru Nanak (the first guru in the Sikh lineage) in the room and named the room the Harmandir, thus connecting it with the Harmandir (Golden Temple) in Amritsar, Punjab, an important Sikh shrine. Over the next few decades, this little room became a focal point for this community in Lucknow, particularly as a site for festivals that connected them with their home region, Sindh, which they had left when it became a part of Pakistan during the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

Most of the Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow had migrated from Sindh to India after Partition. The community center, known as the Kasturbai Nari Shala, had primarily functioned to provide employment, housing, and seamstress training for destitute Sindhi widows, most of whom had lost their husbands in the violence of Partition. The community's Sufi adviser, whom they identified as Sufi Sant (pious one, virtuous teacher) Rochal Das, was also a Hindu immigrant from Sindh. Long before Partition, he had taken initiation from Qutab Ali Shah, a Muslim *pir* (spiritual master) in Sindh, and he identified himself as a Sufi, a Sindhi Hindu Sufi. Wanting the community to address more than the economic needs of the widows, he considered the Guru Granth Sahib to be the best means to provide spiritual guidance for the widows and the entire community.

As community activities outgrew the small room, the community constructed a separate building in 1977 that housed a Guru Granth Sahib and was also named the Harmandir. However, in 1985, the community became concerned that, because of the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib

in the Harmandir, proposed legislation would designate this new building as a *gurdwara* and place it under the control of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), an elected council of Punjabi Sikhs that controlled the management of *gurdwaras* in some areas in India. The Sikh agitation in the Punjab in the early 1980s had temporarily concluded with an accord between Rajiv Gandhi, then prime minister of India, and moderate Sikhs. The accord included Gandhi's promise to pass the All India Gurdwara Legislation that would place *gurdwaras* throughout India under the control of the SGPC. Although the bill never passed Parliament and its definition of *gurdwaras* might have excluded the Harmandir in Lucknow (Kashmir Singh 1991), Sindhis in Lucknow changed the name of the Harmandir to Hari Om Mandir. Beyond the insertion of "Om" into the name, the community also began adding other elements commonly identified as Hindu, including *murtis* (sculptures) of several deities, a large brass Om over the canopy that housed the Guru Granth Sahib, and a copy of the Bhagavad Gita under the canopy alongside the Guru Granth Sahib. Over the next fifteen years, they continued to add other *murtis* as well as images of various Sindhi spiritual teachers, including an image of Sufi Sant Rochal Das.

Defying Religious Boundaries

Referring to a religious leader as a Hindu Sufi and placing the Guru Granth Sahib underneath an Om in the center of a religious institution clearly defy the boundaries that scholars and people in India generally presume to exist between Hinduism, Sufi Islam, and Sikhism. Despite the variety of activities that comprise the Hari Om Mandir, most within that community specifically asserted that they and their practices are Hindu, as evidenced by their departure from Pakistan following the Partition of South Asia along religious lines. However, in a painful irony, after many Sindhi Hindus migrated to India because of their Hindu identification, some people in India began to question that identification, describing the Sindhis as Sikhs because of their veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib. Broadly speaking, this book addresses these tensions between the dominant understandings of religions that recognize specific boundaries between Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism and the general assertions of Sindhi Hindus. Analyzing the ways Sindhi Hindus have established their practices and heritage in the context of their diaspora from Sindh and the ways that they represent their community and practices to non-Sindhis, including myself, exposes the differing understandings of religious

boundaries that create debates whether this community is Hindu, Sufi, or Sikh.

Although the dominant understandings in India and within academic studies place *murtis* of deities, Sufi *pirs,* and the Guru Granth Sahib into three distinct categories, those assertions have always been contested. I will address the complexities and historical shifts in the dominant understandings of religious boundaries in India in the next chapter, but a simplified overview here illustrates the differences between the dominant views and the practices at the Harmandir / Hari Om Mandir. Since the early twentieth century, many Sikhs have argued that their lineage of gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib belong to a distinct religion, not a subgroup under Hinduism. This position has been enshrined legally since the 1920s through the establishment of the SGPC to control *gurdwaras* in the Punjab. Similarly, Islam is codified as a separate religion in India, as Muslims in India come under the jurisdiction of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, which develops aspects of the civil code that specifically apply to Muslims. The connection of Sufism to this distinct religion is evident in the symbols, including Arabic calligraphy, minarets, and the color green, surrounding most sites that people identify as Sufi.

The Harmandir / Hari Om Mandir, and the challenges that it represents because it defies these commonly recognized religious boundaries, is not unique in its formation of Sindhi Hindu practices. As Sindhi Hindus have settled around the world in the decades following Partition, many have developed similar practices in formal institutions like the Harmandir / Hari Om Mandir, in guru movements, through the commemoration of festivals, and within the practices of individuals. Although these activities consistently incorporate elements that many non-Sindhis identify as combinations from Hinduism, Sufism, and Sikhism, their practices also reflect the diverse understandings and varying emphases among Sindhi Hindus. In this diversity, the constructed nature of Sindhi regional identity becomes evident, as Sindhi Hindu communities in diaspora combine people from different regions within Sindh, different social divisions in the region, and different families, who would not have necessarily come together in one community before their migration. As the material in the following chapters provides examples of this diversity, the questions surrounding contested boundaries extend beyond the labels defining major religions to include regional identifications and cultural understandings.

Within the diverse ways of constructing their Sindhi heritage, Sindhi Hindus generally identify these varied practices as representative of that regional heritage. The region of Sindh, described more fully in the next chapter, exists on the periphery of the contemporary center of Hinduism, and its peoples have adapted practices aspects from the neighboring regions

of Persia and Punjab that non-Sindhis commonly identify with Sufi Islam and Sikhism, respectively. Maintaining such a range of practices, many Sindhi Hindus specifically understand Hinduism as a broad category that encompasses varied elements. Sikh traditions are a subset within that broad Hindu category, and Sufism is an expression of devotion to the divine that extends beyond any specific religious boundary. Therefore, while Sindhi Hindus identify themselves as Hindu, most do not see that identification conflicting with their veneration of Sufi *pirs* and Sikh gurus. As with Rochal Das's identification as a Hindu Sufi, some individual Sindhis explicitly claim to be both Hindu and Sufi, understanding those labels to represent transhistorical categories that are not exclusive of each other.

Power and Differing Understandings of Religious Boundaries

The different understandings of religious boundaries, along with the cultural significance of those labels, have created pressure for Sindhi Hindus to change their lives and practices in various ways. As the Partition of South Asia in 1947 followed religious lines, most Sindhi Hindus chose to migrate because their identification as Hindus raised questions about their future in Pakistan. Many experienced their migration, including the traumatic violence that some witnessed and the loss of their homes and much, if not all, of their wealth, as a forced diaspora based on religion. Beyond the practical challenges, most Sindhi Hindus experienced Partition as a permanent, involuntary separation from their homeland, including important familial and religious sites there.

Expecting to be welcomed as members of the majority population of their new home, Sindhi Hindus expressed surprise that non-Sindhi Hindus questioned their Hindu identification because of their inclusion of Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib, even though both Sindhi and non-Sindhi Hindus often participate in a range of religious sites and represent Hinduism as tolerant. H. G. Daswani, a Sindhi Hindu in Lucknow, expressed exasperation in an article detailing questions that non-Sindhis asked about Sindhi Hindus, including how Sindhis, as Hindus, venerate Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib (n.d., [1]). Apparently inclusiveness and fluidity reach their limit when something outside the recognized borders of Hinduism, such as the Guru Granth Sahib, occupies a central position for a community. As Sindhis typically wanted the majority community to recognize them as Hindus with their own regional traditions, such as Bengalis or Tamils, these conflicting understandings forced

Sindhi Hindus to defend their Hindu identification and to be cautious in representing their practices to non-Sindhis. Therefore, their insistence on being Hindu was not directed solely at me, the non-Indian scholar who might insist on fixed boundaries; they addressed non-Sindhi Indians whose boundaries were not as permeable as some Hindus and some scholars have suggested (Marriott 1992).

The implications of the differing understandings extend beyond Partition and the frustration of being dismissed as not truly Hindu. Some of the legal designations in India and elsewhere identify such formations of practices to be outside the recognized boundaries. The proposed *gurdwara* legislation in India represents one of several legal battles on the basis of the dominant understandings of religious boundaries that threaten the maintenance of Sindhi Hindu institutions. Such legal concerns have pushed Sindhi Hindus to conform partially to the dominant understandings of religious boundaries, as evidenced in the changes in the Harmandir in Lucknow, yet those changes also illustrate the power of Sindhi Hindus to resist the dominant understandings, as they did not choose to conform fully to the dominant definitions.

The power of the dominant definitions was also apparent in Sindhi Hindu representations to me. Several Sindhis explained that they are "basically Hindu." The insertion of qualifying terms such as "basically" implies that they are not fully or truly Hindu and reflects the influence of the dominant understandings on Sindhi assertions. Although Sindhi Hindus repeatedly contested the power of others, particularly Punjabi Sikhs and North Indian Hindus, to question their Hindu identification, the repeated defensiveness surrounding their identifications reflects the precariousness of their Hindu identification in a context dominated by non-Sindhi understandings of religious boundaries.

These religious labels also intersected with other ideological and social groupings. While a Hindu identification was virtually universal among Sindhis whom I met in India, at times Sindhis identified with all Hindus, while in other situations they distinguished themselves for their superior tolerance as Sindhi Hindus. For those who identified themselves, like Rochal Das, as Hindu Sufis, their assertion correlated generally with their references to the communal harmony of their homeland. In some descriptions, this harmony arose because of superior Hindu tolerance and its influence on the Muslims of Sindh, while at other points regional unity was more important than religious differences. Others were less willing to recognize Islam on par with Hinduism within their regional heritage, sometimes associating Islam negatively with the trauma of Partition. For those Sindhi Hindus who have migrated outside of India, as a minority within the minority Hindu immigrant community, they similarly have

had to balance their connections to all Hindus with their distinctiveness as an ethno-religious community (Mukhi 2000, 100–101).

These different implications of their identification correlate with elements in the political landscape of India. Some Sindhi Hindus shifted between Hindu Nationalism, Indian secular nationalism and Sindhi regionalism. In the context of twenty-first-century India particularly, these different identifications had significant social and political implications that encouraged such shifts. The significance of the Hindu Nationalist movement encouraged many Sindhis to emphasize their connections to the majority community, while others emphasized the idealized harmony of Sindh as they promoted the communal harmony envisioned in India's version of secularism. Sindhi communities also used political relations to promote their regional interests, including lobbying for the recognition of Sindhi as one of the official languages of India. Therefore, the shifting representations of Sindhis connected to their own competing agendas as well as the different discursive systems within which Sindhis functioned. Analyzing the experiences and assertions of Sindhi Hindus in particular places in India, Southeast Asia, and the United States, as I do in the following chapters, further illustrates the dynamics between the power of the dominant understandings of religious boundaries and the power of communities like Sindhi Hindus to resist those understandings.

Religious Boundaries, Sindhi Hindus, and Scholarship

Classifications within the academic study of religions, whether one looks at university course listings, chapter divisions in textbooks, or subdivisions within the academy, generally recognize boundaries dividing Hinduism, Sufi Islam, and Sikhism that resemble the dominant understandings in India. Though few have written about Sindhi Hindus specifically, most references to them have applied the dominant definitions to label the Sindhis in ways that fail to reflect Sindhi self-representations or the contestation surrounding those definitions. An early Orientalist account concerning Sindh, which Richard Burton published less than a decade after the British took control of Sindh in 1843, identifies both the Hindu and Muslim practices of that region as heterodox because they failed to match his expectations of orthodoxy ([1851]).

More recently, in a historical study of Sindhi Hindu traders, Claude Markovits asserts, "Most Sind merchants defined themselves as Hindus, at least from the 1891 Census onward, but they were actually Nanakpanthis"

(2000, 250). Since Nanakpanthi (a subtradition commonly associated with Sikhism) places Sindhis outside the boundaries of Hinduism, Markovits directly dismisses Sindhi self-representations by conforming to the dominant definitions. This dismissal of Sindhi Hindu assertions, which at least one other scholar has repeated, citing Markovits explicitly (Ansari 2005, 20), assumes that the dominant categories provide an adequate basis for rejecting the claims of Sindhi Hindus. By analyzing the meanings, motivations, and contestations behind Sindhi self-representations, I follow a different approach that reveals more about both Sindhi Hindu experiences and the operation of religious labels and avoids the uncritical replication of the dominant understandings that some groups promote and other groups contest.

Another label sometimes applied to the Sindhis is syncretism. As the term syncretism often implies a contrast between pure orthodoxy and corrupt combinations, most applications of the term assume the validity of traditional definitions of religious boundaries and typically fail to take the contested definitions of religions seriously. Much like Markovits's assertions, designating Sindhi Hindu practices as syncretic ignores the assertions of many Sindhi Hindus that their practices fit within the boundaries of Hinduism. However, since Sindhi Hindus frequently shift between representing their practices as specifically Hindu and describing them as a combination of diverse elements, syncretism is applicable to some Sindhi Hindu representations when it is defined as a conscious blending of elements.[1] Instead of simplistically labeling Sindhi Hindus as syncretic, analyzing the syncretic references within Sindhi Hindu representations highlights further the choices that Sindhi Hindus make and the continuing influence of the dominant understandings on them.

Structure of the Book

The central issues of the contestation between the dominant understandings of religious boundaries and the practices of Sindhi Hindus reinforces the postmodern, postcolonial assertions that religious boundaries are constructions of particular cultures and eras (Asad 1993; Masuzawa 2005; Pandey 1992; Said 1978). Any discussion of the challenges that Sindhi Hindu communities have faced and the ways they have constructed their practices and represented themselves must consider the multiple contexts that influence their experiences. In the next chapter, I discuss a variety of the layers that had an impact on Sindhi Hindus. I directly address the image of Sindh that Sindhi Hindus created and the cultural and historical

context of Sindh more generally. I also describe the physical and ideological context of Lucknow, the city in North India where I conducted in-depth fieldwork with Sindhi Hindus, and the events in the world and in the region that influenced the assertions of the Sindhis and my interpretation of those statements.

Chapters 2 through 6 detail some of the various ways Sindhi Hindus have created their heritage outside of Sindh, focusing on different aspects of their experiences. Chapter 2 discusses Sindhi institutions, including the Hari Om Mandir and other institutions outside Lucknow, to analyze the general conflicts between Sindhi understandings and the dominant understandings, and the ways these Sindhis have developed institutions in the context of diaspora. Chapter 3 highlights the multiple responses to these conflicts within three guru movements that were prominent in Lucknow and beyond, including the Shiv Shanti Ashram in Lucknow, the movement associated with the Hindu Sufi Rochal Das, and the transnational Sadhu Vaswani Mission. Chapter 4 compares Sindhi representations of the stories and images of two figures important to many Sindhi Hindus, Jhule Lal, who is often identified as the Sindhi god, and Nanak, the first guru of the Sikh lineage. This comparison reveals more of the complex dynamics of their negotiation of the diasporic context and the limits that the dominant understandings place on Sindhi representations. Chapter 5 continues this comparison by focusing on two prominent Sindhi religious festivals, Cheti Chand, which celebrates the birthday of Jhule Lal, and Nanak Jayanti, the birthday of Nanak. The ways that Sindhi Hindus presented these festivals highlights the choices that they often make in response to the power of the dominant discourses and the different relationships that communities have with these figures. Chapter 6 focuses on the variety of attitudes toward Sindhi traditions and the combinations of practices that various individual Sindhi Hindus presented. As several of these Sindhis were less active in the main Sindhi institutions, this collection of individuals further highlights both the diversity within the Sindhi community and the tensions inherent in their participation in multiple ritual schemes.

By weaving together ethnographic descriptions and interview materials, this book conveys some of the complexities of the experiences of Sindhi Hindus. Their experiences in Lucknow and elsewhere demonstrate the impact of dominant definitions of religious boundaries on communities whose understandings of religions differ from the dominant understandings surrounding them. While Sindhi Hindus struggle with the dynamics of each diasporic situation, they force anyone who discusses them also to struggle with the limits of our linguistic options. What do we mean when we use the labels Hindu, Sufi, or Sikh? What do individual Sindhi Hindus mean when they use one or more of those labels for themselves? Instead of

searching for definitive answers to questions about Sindhi understandings and formations, this project raises more questions about the assumptions that we, whether Sindhi or non-Sindhi, tend to make about religions and the boundaries that define them. Perhaps that is as it should be, as we recognize the contested nature of the elements that surround us.

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Chapter 1

Placing Sindhis

H. G. Daswani, a Sindhi Hindu in Lucknow, was born in Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1941. His experiences and assertions introduce some of the contexts that many Sindh Hindus negotiated as they established their lives in diaspora. Sitting in the air-conditioned office of a Sindhi merchant in Lucknow, Daswani recalled his family's response to Partition. Like many other Sindhi Hindus, his family remained in Hyderabad after Partition, anticipating that migration would not be necessary. Daswani explained, "They thought only kings can change, but population never changes." However, after some unrest in Sindh, as refugees flooded in from independent India, and then the assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi in January 1948, Daswani's family and many other Sindhi Hindus lost hope and began to migrate. Daswani's family went by train to the border in Rajasthan and spent two weeks in a refugee camp, living in tents. They then moved by train to Madhya Pradesh, where authorities housed them in a vacant school building.

In March 1948, Daswani's family traveled to Agra, where his father received a position on the police force. Daswani's father had been a police officer in Sindh and took a position in Agra that a Muslim had held before migrating to Pakistan. In Agra, the family spent fifteen days on the train platform before moving to an iron mill where the workers were on strike. They lived in the iron mill with sixteen other families until they found more suitable housing.

Daswani's father continued on the police force in Agra until he retired in 1959. When his family moved to Delhi, where Daswani's elder brother had a job, Daswani completed his bachelor's and master's degrees and became a teacher. He then passed the Provincial Civil Service Exam in

Uttar Pradesh, leading to his appointment as an engineer in Lucknow. He served there for more than thirty years, until he retired the year before our conversation.

All of Daswani's extended family did not migrate, though, as one of his father's sisters remained in Sindh. Her husband was a prominent *zamindar* (landholder who often functioned as quasi-ruler) and, when he went to the train station to migrate, several Sindhi Muslim friends prevailed on him to stay in Sindh, literally at the last minute. In fact, the family did not have time to retrieve their luggage before the train for India departed. Daswani recounted, "His luggage reached here in India, and he remained there."

Beyond reestablishing careers and households, Daswani and his family worked to maintain ties to their homeland despite the separation. Recreating aspects of Sindhi traditions in Lucknow, Daswani installed a variety of images in his home shrine, including Nanak, deities such as Vishnu, Krishna, and Ganesh, and Shahenshah, a Sufi master whom his father revered. This emphasis on Sindhi traditions, however, created unexpected challenges for Daswani and his community. Some of their new neighbors, who were supposed to be their coreligionists, rejected the Hindu identification of Daswani and other Sindhis. Daswani declared,

> There is a misconception in minds of local people. Even after fifty years they are not able to recognize us as Hindus. They don't because we worship Guru Nanak. "So you are Sikhs," [they say]. We worship Guru Nanak because we think Guru Nanak is a part of Hinduism.

Drawing on his childhood experiences and the stories that his family related to him, Daswani remained frustrated by the loss of his homeland through Partition. He asserted,

> Because of our minority this will go to Pakistan. We don't accept the Two Nation Theory [idea that Hindus and Muslims formed two distinct nations], but they are partitioning India on the basis of Two Nation Theory. Is this hypocrisy or not? If a province of ten percent Hindus—that is Kashmir—can remain in India, why can't Sindh with twenty-five percent Hindus remain in India, when seventy-five percent Muslims are Sufi? They are mostly Sufi. They are only Muslim in name. Their fathers were Muslims. In fact, Sindhi Muslims are not fanatic. They are Sufi.
>
> If you go there, to Sindh, there are three or four places, permanent places, where Hindus and Muslims both worship there. Like *dargahs* [shrines, usually including a tomb of a Sufi] and all that, two or three places are there. There are festivals, common festivals of Hindus and Muslims, they are secular. But you say Sindh is part of Pakistan, so it was totally unjustified.

Daswani's Place among Sindhis

While each person's experiences are unique, Daswani's personal stories and statements introduce some aspects of the experiences of Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow in relation to migrating and reestablishing their lives in a different cultural context. Daswani was quite vocal about his frustrations with Partition and their experiences during their forced migration, as he would term it. He, like many Sindhis, constructed an image of his homeland on the basis of his limited memories, stories from others, and his own needs and desires. The ways that Sindhi Hindus constructed their representations of their homeland is one important component of their experiences. However, as Daswani demonstrated, the immediate context of their new lives, where they went to school, worked, and raised families, also had a significant impact on their experiences. Beyond the physical context of Lucknow, the social dynamics and ideological components of Lucknow played a central role in the experiences of Daswani and other Sindhis. Moreover, the events in India and beyond that coincided with these representations to me, including an emphasis on terrorism in connection to Pakistan and al-Qaeda, influenced his statements and those of many other Sindhis, as well as my reception of them. Considering all of these contexts is vital for analyzing Sindhi Hindu experiences.

Daswani's statements, however, also had some idiosyncrasies. Most Sindhi Hindus whom I have met emphasized their business acumen as a sign of their community's identity. The profitability of their business ventures enabled much of the development of Sindhi institutions that I discuss in the following chapters. However, Daswani, like his father, was among the minority of Sindhi Hindus who have, for centuries, served as professionals in the employ of the rulers of their homes. Some Sindhi Hindus made significant distinctions between Bhaiband (segment of Sindhi Hindus who are typically merchants) and Amil (segment of Sindhi Hindus who are typically in professional or civil service occupations), and sometimes these distinctions operated similarly to an endogamous *jati* (subcaste). Perhaps, because of their luck and the quick acceptance of a job, the transition of Daswani's family to India appears easier than the stories that some Sindhis retell, particularly since a job as a police officer gives more immediate stability than starting a business in a new place does.

The Homeland—Sindh

Daswani had few clear memories of life in Sindh before Partition because he migrated as a young child. Most of his assertions about the homeland

reflected a nostalgic formation of what Sindh was like, which drew on idealized memories, stories that he heard from family members and other Sindhis, and the ideological interests that he wanted to promote. Few Sindhis whom I interviewed held any personal memories of Sindh, as many were born after Partition and others, like Daswani, had left at an early age. Very few Sindhi Hindus whom I interviewed had visited Sindh in the half-century preceding my research, due in part to difficulties between India and Pakistan. The stories and general representations that Daswani and others presented to me are particularly important for understanding their construction of their Sindhi heritage but must be balanced with historical information about Sindh from other sources.

Sindhi Hindu Representations of Their Homeland

The most common assertion from Sindhi Hindus about the unique character of Sindh emphasized its communal harmony. Many Sindhis created images of a region where Hindus and Muslims held no animosity toward each other and communed like brothers and sisters. Daswani, for example, highlighted this trait as he described Hindu and Muslim participation in religious festivals and the presence of shared shrines. His story of Sindhi Muslims pledging protection to Daswani's uncle to get him to stay in Sindh, which resembled many stories from Sindhi Hindus about the grief of Muslims as their Hindu friends departed, added to this image. An English biography of Kanwar Ram, a Sindhi guru, represents the region similarly, asserting, "Hindus Muslims lives [*sic*] as brothers, with friendship, and respect, affection and love for each other" (Punshi 1985, 6). Reflecting that cultural trait, Kanwar Ram accepted both Hindu and Muslim followers, though the biography clearly identifies him as a Hindu (77).

To maintain such assertions about the communal harmony of Sindh, considering the terror of Partition and communal violence, many Sindhi Hindus differentiated the Muslims of Sindh from other Muslims. Daswani explicitly emphasized the distinctions between Sindhi Muslims who followed a Sufi approach and other Muslims, whom he implicitly characterized as fanatics. He directly declared, "Sindhi Muslims, they are not like—what is the word—terrorists. They are not; they are Sufis. They go through rituals, but they are not so fanatic." His frustration over Partition also led him to refer to Muslims who promoted Partition, what he termed "the Muslims of Aligarh," as murderers. Such extreme statements that essentialized non-Sindhi Muslims as violent were not unique to Daswani. The equation of the term "terrorists" with Muslims also reflected the

temporal context of early 2002 and the prominence of the term in India following both the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the attack on India's Parliament in December 2001.

The idealized harmony in Sindh, which Daswani and others emphasized, expressed itself in the recognition, at least theoretically, of commonality between Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Muslims. This distinction between Sindhi Muslims and other Muslims enabled Sindhi Hindus to maintain their idealized representation of Sindh as a place of communal harmony despite the terrors of Partition and their departure. Daswani reflected the assertions of many Sindhi Hindus when he suggested that the unrest that arose in Sindh came from non-Sindhi Muslims, specifically the refugees who flooded Karachi and other parts of Sindh following Partition. These stories also created a sense of nostalgia that, if only harmonious Sindh had been left alone, they could have remained there safely and avoided many of the difficulties that arose from their migration.

Another representation of Sufi Muslims of Sindh similarly accentuated the uniqueness of Sindhi Muslims while implying the superiority of Hindu traditions. W. H. Gurnani, a leader at the Hari Om Mandir, explained the contrast between Sufism and Islam with reference to the influence of Hinduism. When I mentioned the most famous Sufi poet of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif, he made an interesting distinction between Muslims and Sufis. He declared, "*Sūfī sant vo the jo islām ko sacce ḍhaṅge se mānate the. Lekin vo kaṭṭar panthī nahīn the. Vo īśvara ya allāh ko alag alag nahīn mānate the.* (Sufi *sants* were those people who followed Islam the right way. But they were not fanatics. They didn't consider Allah and Ishwar different.)" He thus recognized the Islamic heritage of Sufism while emphasizing their promotion of a universal sense of the divine. As he continued, the focus shifted to the distinction of Sindhi Muslims from other Muslims. He asserted, "*Dhīre dhīre ve samajh gaye ki unke yahā̐ jo bhī dharma haĭ usse the dharma zyadā shreshṭha haĭ. Unhone phir yahā̐ ke dharma ko apanāyā. Vo sūfī the. Un sūfiyon ne jo dharma kā pachānā kithā vo dono dharma kā mishraña thā.* (Slowly, slowly they [Muslims] realized, 'The way of this place [Hinduism] which is also dharma is much better than ours.' So they adopted the dharma of this place. They became Sufis. The dharma which those Sufis assimilated was a mixture of both dharmas.)" Therefore, the Sufi Muslims of Sindh recognized the superiority of Hindu traditions and blended them with Islam, in essence accepting a Hindu reformation of Islam according to Gurnani.

Beyond asserting Hindu superiority, as Gurnani did, many Sindhi Hindus also bolstered their Hindu credentials by highlighting the centrality of Sindh in ancient Hinduism. These assertions drew largely on the prominent geographical feature of Sindh, the Sindhu River (now known

as the Indus River). Connecting to a traditional definition of Hinduism, many Sindhis asserted that the Vedas were composed on the banks of the Sindhu River. For example, the biographer of Kanwar Ram specifically quotes portions of the Rig Veda that praise the Sindhu River (Punshi 1985, 2–3, 5). Gurnani also argued that the presence in Sindh of Mohenjo Daro, one of the earliest archaeological sites in South Asia, demonstrated the region's importance for the early culture of the subcontinent. Moreover, highlighting how the term Hindu originated as a Persian pronunciation of the name of the Sindhu River, he declared that all Hindus are really Sindhus. K. R. Malkani in *The Sindh Story* goes even further to argue that this region was the source not only for Indian civilization but also for ancient Greek and Egyptian civilizations (1984, 6–9). Such characterizations promoted the significance of their heritage and countered any suggestion that Sindh and Sindhis were marginal to Hindu traditions or the Indian nation.

While the centrality of Sindh for early Hinduism supported their Hindu identification, it failed to address the differences between their traditions and the dominant Hindu understandings. Therefore, other Sindhis emphasized another geographical factor, Sindh's location on the western edge of South Asia, which distanced it from Brahmanical Hinduism and infused it with other cultural influences. Several Sindhis emphasized the connections between Sindh and Punjab, its northern neighbor, such as Nanak's journey through Sindh as he traveled from Punjab to the sea. Jaya Bhambhwani, a young Sindhi professional, specifically defined Sindhi culture as "a strange amalgamation of Sindhi and Punjabi folk legends." Instead of rejecting the application of syncretism to Sindhi practices, her description suggests a different type of syncretism that blends regional variations rather than different religions.

Noting the proximity of Sindh to Persia, Sindhis also frequently highlighted how their homeland was the entry point for the first, and many subsequent, Muslim invasions of India. Therefore, the culture has experienced the influence of Islamic traditions for well more than a millennium. This historical connection to Muslim invasions led some Sindhis to emphasize the tyranny of Muslim rule and the struggles that Hindus faced to maintain their traditions. The story of the Sindhi deity Jhule Lal (see chapter 4) directly reinforces this trope of Muslim oppression of faithful Hindus. As such emphases contradicted their assertions about the harmonious character of Sindhi Muslims, the assertions reflected the tensions within Sindhi attitudes toward Muslims.

In addition to these general representations of the region and its culture, Sindhi Hindus represented the character of the Sindhi people as distinctive. I repeatedly heard Sindhis state that Sindhis never beg, since

they are proud and hardworking people. Sindhi Hindus often emphasized the unique business acumen of their community, an assertion that the phenomenal success of some Sindhi businesses supports. D. M. Punjabi, a leader of Sindhi cultural and political movements in Lucknow, emphasized that Sindhis were not criminals. He then clarified his assertion by distinguishing between violent crimes, which, he asserted, Sindhis very rarely commit, and financial crimes, which, he said, some Sindhis might commit. Others explained this success by highlighting the willingness of Sindhi Hindus to adapt to any location, including quickly mastering the local language to enhance their success in trade. Amil families also exhibited this adaptability in terms of local languages and customs, which was necessary to join the civil service in different lands. This adaptability related to their desire to connect with non-Sindhis and the subsequent frustrations, which Daswani articulated, when non-Sindhis identified Sindhis as non-Hindus.

With my interest in their religious practices, perhaps the most consistent representation that Sindhis made about their community surrounded ritualized activities. In various ways, Sindhis described themselves as being open to a variety of traditions. B. K. Thadani, a member of the management committee at the Hari Om Mandir, asserted, for example, "the scope of our belief is very widespread," while a Sindhi retailer who was less involved in community activities explained that they were "not very particular about any way of worship." Although this openness confirmed their spirit of cooperation with multiple religions, it also correlated with their representation of Hinduism, which they described as a tolerant religion.

Their representations of the situation in Sindh at the end of the twentieth century also exacerbated their concerns about the loss of their homeland and culture. Many Sindhis described a strong Punjabi bias within Pakistan that continually oppressed the Sindhis, both Muslim and Hindu, who remained in the region. Most notably, the diversion of water from the Indus River and its tributaries in Punjab has created a significant ecological crisis. On a cultural level, Sindhis worried that the Sindhi language was disappearing within Sindh itself. The dominance of Urdu among the refugees who entered Sindh and the dominance of Punjabi concerns throughout the central government limited the value of learning Sindhi as learning other languages, especially Urdu and English became more necessary (Ansari 2005, 147–148). On these issues, many diasporic Sindhis felt significant solidarity with Sindhi nationalists in Sindh, regardless of religious identification, yet their separation from the region limited their personal connection with these struggles and their ability to participate in them.

Scholarly Representations of the History and Culture of Sindh

Although some scholarly discussions of Sindh corroborate the communal harmony and flexible approach to religious practices that Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow frequently idealized, the historical record is more complex than what my interviewees often suggested. Sindh has experienced a variety of invasions and cultural influences throughout its history, extending well before Islam. Alexander the Great invaded Sindh at the end of his expeditions to the east. Early Buddhism was also very influential in Sindh until a Hindu revival eventually reinforced Hindu traditions (Gulraj 1979, 15). The first Muslim invasion of South Asia took place when Muhammad bin Qasim gained control of Sindh in 711 CE, less than a century after the death of Muhammad. Since then, an array of Muslim rulers controlled the region, though these rulers and the Islamicate influences they brought were not religiously or culturally monolithic.

The caliphs appointed governors for Sindh following its conquest in 711 CE. As the sea trade from Sindh shifted to the Red Sea in the tenth century, Sindh came under the influence of the Fatimid rulers and their Ismailism.[1] Later, the Mughal emperors controlled Sindh from 1574 until the decline of the empire in the mid-eighteenth century, when Persia took Sindh from the Mughals. For the remainder of that century, Persian and Afghan rulers competed with Sindhi ruling families of the Talpurs and Mirs for control of the region (Lari 1994, 145–151).

In contrast to the focus on Muslim tyranny in the story of Jhule Lal and some Sindhi representations, the experiences of the Sindhi population under the rule of Muslims varied. Particularly with the Talpurs, some Hindus served in significant positions in the administration of the rulers, which led to the development of the Amil community as a professional Hindu community. Bhaiband families also prospered under the various regimes to the extent of controlling almost all of the trade and moneylending in Sindhi cities (A. Jones 2002). Nevertheless, several British officials visiting the region emphasized the oppression of Hindus, presumably to justify British involvement there. For example, James Burnes ignores the political power of the Amil Hindus as he justifies future British incursions into Sindh by detailing the difficult plight of Hindus, including limited opportunities for religious expression and the denial of particular social honors (Burnes [1831], 83).

The influences from West and Central Asia extended beyond the political control of various Islamic empires. Numerous Sufi Muslims migrated to Sindh and became influential. Sayyid Jalal ad-din Surkh Push, a Sufi in

the Suhrawardi initiatic lineage, which was founded in Baghdad, moved into Sindh in the thirteenth century. The Suhrawardi order was noted for combating the Ismaili influences that arose in Sindh with the connection to the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt. Also in the thirteenth century, one of the most famous Sufis of Sindh, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, came to the region from Azerbaijan (Lari 1994, 51).

Several other significant Sufis in Sindhi history were born in the region and reflected the interreligious connections of the region in their poetry and in the veneration that they received from both Hindus and Muslims. Shah Abdul Latif was born in 1689 in Sindh and became extremely popular for his poetry that utilized traditional Sufi images along with images of Sindhi folk tales and elements commonly understood as Hindu (Lari 1994, 155–156; Gulraj 1979, 117–120). Although Latif followed traditional Islamic practices, he denounced any emphasis on a Muslim identification over a Hindu identification (Lari 1994, 169; Gulraj 1979, 102–103). The Sufi Abd al-Wahab, popularly known as Sachal Sarmast, lived in the generation after Latif. Carrying the rejection of religious distinctions further, Sachal denounced formal religious practices and incorporated Hindu and Sikh references as well as Arabic quotations into his poetry (Lari, 1994, 169; Gulraj 1979, 192–193).

Beyond the influence of West and Central Asia, several scholars discussing Sindhi Hindus also emphasize the historical connections between Sindh and Punjab that many Sindhis mentioned. Matthew Cook, for example, argues that many Punjabis migrated to Sindh, eventually being absorbed into the Lohana community, an all-encompassing community that includes the vast majority of the Hindus of Sindh (Cook n.d., 4–9). In a similar vein, Scott Levi argues that many firms in Multan, Punjab, moved their base to Shikarpur in Upper Sindh following geopolitical changes surrounding the rise of the Durrani regime in Afghanistan in the mid-eighteenth century (Levi 2002, 112–119). Beyond migrating populations, the Nirmalas, now recognized as heterodox Sikhs, spread Nanak's teachings through Sindh. Harjot Oberoi even places Sindh "at the periphery of central Punjab" (1994, 128).

In the period preceding the British annexation of Sindh in 1843, the people of the region gained significantly by adapting to changing political and trade circumstances. In 1720, Karachi became the main port on the Indus, as the other ports became unusable due to silt build-up. This event cemented Sindh's dominance over the trade of North India, as goods traveling to and from the Persian Gulf primarily moved through Karachi. About the same time, northern Sindh became the dominant link between India and Central Asia as the rise of the Durrani Empire shifted the best caravan route away from Punjab (Markovits 2000, 37–38). Shikarpur in Upper

Sindh subsequently became the hub of networks of traders/moneylenders throughout Central Asia and Persia (Levi 2002, 112–119).

After Sir Charles Napier conquered Sindh for the British in 1843, the British altered the economic opportunities of the region. The favoritism toward British shipping firms eroded traditional Sindhi business opportunities in Karachi. The relocation of the British capital of Sindh from Hyderabad to the port at Karachi created further upheavals among the Hindu merchants and administrative officials who dominated Hyderabad. Adapting to these changes, two networks of Sindhi merchants redirected their businesses. Hyderabadi merchants developed a network of import/export traders outside of Sindh to sell Oriental crafts to European tourists, thus tapping into the European fashion for the Orient. This network eventually organized Hyderabadi wholesalers throughout East Asia who would send curios to Hyderabadi retailers in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The Shikarpuris established extensive networks in Central Asia but then shifted their activities, primarily to North India, in response to the changes in Central Asia following the Russian Revolution. Before Partition, workers in both networks usually left their families in Sindh while they worked outside of Sindh for a contracted period. After Partition, these networks provided opportunities for entire Sindhi families to resettle permanently (Markovits 2000, 104, 117–139, 166–176).

Beyond the political and economic dynamics, the culture of the region before Partition resembled many of the general assertions of Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow, according to a work by U. T. Thakur, who studied at the University of Bombay ([1959]). Providing perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of that culture before Partition, Thakur highlights the blended nature of Sindhi participation, with Hindus adopting selected Sikh traditions and both Muslims and Hindus participating in each other's practices, which he labeled as Sufism. Reflecting, perhaps, the dominant definitions of religions, he suggests that they "did not strictly follow their faith" (21). Thakur also notes that caste identifications were not as important among Sindhi Hindus, asserting, for example, that interdining was common because solidarity was important for the minority Hindus. Nevertheless, Thakur lists various castes present among Sindhi Hindus in the early 1940s, including the majority Lohana caste, which was "an all absorbing caste" of Bhaiband, and smaller castes, including other Bhaiband groups and various Brahmin subcastes, including the Thakurs. His account also notes the problem of applying simplified caste labels to Sindh, as seen with the Amil. Primarily Lohana, the Amil as professionals and bureaucrats serving the rulers of Sindh became a hereditary group that "adopted the rigidity of a caste," though they still accepted additional Lohana into their community (57–58, 60–61).

While Thakur's assertions of harmony correspond to the descriptions of Hindu-Muslim interaction from various Sindhis (Punshi 1985; Gajwani 2000), the strong emphasis on communal harmony and assertions that outsiders instigated the tensions following Partition do not match some of the historical material. At the time of Partition, religious identifications coincided with socioeconomic factors, as urban merchants, moneylenders, and professionals were almost entirely Hindu and rural agriculturalists were generally Muslim. The economic disparities between the two communities fostered tension and competition in the region, as leaders of both groups maneuvered to enhance their own economic and political positions in the shifting political situation.

These tensions erupted into political strife and occasionally violence. As happened elsewhere in South Asia, the "reconversion" of women and children to Hinduism led to communal violence in 1927 in Larkana, a city in Upper Sindh (Ansari 2005, 35). Although both Sindhi Hindus and Muslims agitated in the late 1920s to separate Sindh from the Bombay Presidency, some of the Muslim supporters merged their distrust of non-Sindhi Hindus who dominated the Bombay Presidency with their resentment of Sindhi Hindu economic dominance (32–34). After the secession of Sindh from the Bombay Presidency in 1936, the cooperation between the communities deteriorated as they competed for control of the Provincial Assembly. In 1939, riots broke out in Sukkur, in northern Sindh, as Muslims agitated to regain control of the Manzilgah building that the Muslims claimed had been a mosque. Some Hindu leaders opposed the Muslim demands, and a waffling colonial administration exacerbated the tensions. In another case, following an attack on the son of a *pir,* some of the *pir's* followers murdered Kanwar Ram, a spiritual teacher whom various Sindhi Hindus claimed as their guru.

The significance of Sindhis in the move toward Partition confirms the exaggerated nature of some representations of Sindhi harmony, including Daswani's insistence that the majority in Sindh would have opposed becoming a part of Pakistan before Partition. In 1938, a Muslim League Provincial Congress in Sindh, which Muhammad Ali Jinnah attended, presented one of the first official statements of the Two Nation Theory (A. Jones 2002, 7–20). After Partition, Sindhi political groups in both communities were disappointed, but from very different positions. Some Sindhi Muslims were unhappy that only a part of Muslim majority Punjab and Bengal became a part of Pakistan, and many were frustrated when refugees from India began to assume the positions and property of Sindhi Hindus who left. Many Sindhi Hindus, like Daswani, were unhappy that Sindh was separated from India (Ansari 2005, 47–48). As these various events and perceptions suggest, the tensions that increased after Partition were not simply the creation of the refugees in Sindh.

Nevertheless, at the time of Partition, many Sindhi Hindus, who formed a significant minority of possibly 1.4 million, did not emigrate immediately (Thakur [1959], 30). The influx of refugees from India into Karachi, however, strained conditions in the region. On January 7, 1948, a group in Karachi attacked Sikhs whom officials had brought to Karachi in preparation for their sea voyage to India (Sipe 1976, 259–260). Following this violence, Sindhi Hindus began to flee in greater numbers. Though some Hindus remained in Sindh for several more years, and even a few remain there today, as many as 1.25 million left Sindh by the end of 1948 (Thakur [1959], 30). According to Keith Sipe's figures, the cotton exchange in Karachi that Hindus had dominated before Partition still remained largely in Hindu control in 1950, when seventy-five percent of the brokers were Hindu. However, by 1954, that figure had dropped to seventeen percent as some Hindus left after slowly liquidating their assets. While distrust of the Hindu brokers, especially during the 1965 war with India, further eroded their numbers, even at the time of Sipe's research in the 1970s, a few Hindus continued to work at the exchange (1976, 196–197). At the time of my research, a significant number of Sindhi Hindus remained in Pakistan. Some of these actually visited several of the Sindhi gurus in Lucknow, and some Sindhis in Lucknow, like Daswani, had Hindu relatives continuing to live in Pakistan.

The Diasporic Context

Beyond longing for their homeland, however they imagined it, Sindhi Hindus faced the challenges of being a displaced minority, immersed in a diasporic environment with its own dynamics of social and interreligious relationships. While the term diaspora has broadened from its earlier reference to very specific instances of forced dispersals, most notably the Jewish Diaspora, diaspora generally refers to a range of experiences that combine migration from a home region and the maintenance of a distinct identity (Cohen 1971, 271; Levi 2002, 88). Referring to a community of Hindus in India as diasporic does not fit the common assumption that India is the homeland of a monolithic Hinduism. In the case of Sindhi Hindus, the use of the term reflects significant aspects of their experience, as their regional home is outside of independent India. As many Sindhi Hindus promote their distinct regional identification, they clearly conform to two central issues related to the term diaspora, migration combined with the maintenance of a separate identity.

The physical struggles of migration, such as Daswani detailed, were only the first challenges of their contemporary situations, as rebuilding

their lives after Partition was a long process. Daswani's story reveals some of the difficulties that the period of migration entailed, as both the Indian and Pakistani governments had to respond to the displacement of millions of people. In fact, Daswani's experience of living in tents, unused schools, and factories was mild compared to the trauma and violence that many migrants from both sides of the border faced. Many Sindhi Hindus, particularly the successful business owners, lost greater wealth than Daswani's family and faced harsher conditions to develop new businesses. A common Sindhi trope is that parents or grandparents went from running large businesses in Sindh, with considerable wealth and luxury, to selling combs on the streets of Mumbai after Partition, from which they slowly rebuilt their wealth. Even the Sindhis who resettled around the globe, using the international networks of Sindhi traders, often spent several years, or more, in India before leaving the subcontinent (Markovits 2000, 279–281).

Some Sindhis received assistance from various quarters to aid in resettlement. The Indian government compensated some immigrants, including Sindhis, for lost assets through financial assistance and the assumption of properties that emigrants from India had vacated. Though the compensation typically amounted to only a small fraction of their lost assets, it provided a starting point for the rebuilding process. The Hindu Nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) also assisted many immigrants from Pakistan, including some Sindhis. The memory of this assistance remains, even among subsequent generations of Sindhis, and has encouraged some Sindhis to support the RSS and the Hindu Nationalist movement (Hansen 1999, 95). The established presence of a few Sindhis in India before Partition and the organizations that they started, including the Kasturbai Nari Shala in Lucknow, also eased the resettlement of other Sindhis.

The cultural trait of adaptability, which many Sindhi Hindus emphasized, made the maintenance of a Sindhi Hindu heritage more difficult. The older generation of Sindhis in Lucknow particularly feared their absorption within the majority Hindu community as many Sindhi Hindus adapted to the culture of North India, including the Hindi language. Moreover, their loss of their homeland threatened the maintenance of the Sindhi language in India, despite its eventual recognition as an official language of India.

Their experiences as a victim diaspora also complicated their maintenance of the heritage that they described. Many Sindhi Hindus referred to the harmony between Hindus and Muslims in their homeland, which they contrasted to the communal tensions in India. However, their experiences of Partition and diaspora complicated this valorization of tolerance, as Sindhi Hindus frequently expressed ambiguous feelings toward

Muslims that shifted between harmonious respect, particularly toward Sindhi Muslims, and hatred as they often blamed non-Sindhi Muslims for their losses during Partition. These feelings melded with the influential Hindu Nationalist movement, which some Sindhi Hindus saw as protecting their interests during Partition, and the desires of many Sindhis to promote connections to the majority Hindu community. During my fieldwork, portrayals of Muslims in the media in Lucknow, which repeatedly linked Muslims to violent actions, complicated their conflicted attitudes by validating negative stereotypes of Muslims.

Over the long-term, the diasporic context fostered a variety of other changes. The importance of subregional borders among Sindhis diminished in the environment of their new homes. Before Partition, the subregional connections were quite important, as the primacy of a Sindhi identification was not automatic. Partially because the two dominant networks were centered in cities in different parts of Sindh, with Hyderabad in central Sindh and Shikarpur in Upper Sindh, most of Sindh's global traders identified almost exclusively with fellow traders from their specific subregion. When merchants in these two networks operated in Rangoon in the 1920s, for example, records suggest that they had little contact with each other. Only when Partition made their return to their natal towns of Sindh almost impossible did a more unified Sindhi Hindu community develop (Markovits 2000, 249, 285). In Daswani's case, he remained aware of the district in Sindh from which his extended family came, even though his father worked in Hyderabad; however, his inability to visit that natal district limited his knowledge about the region. For many Sindhis like Daswani, diaspora did not eliminate subregional differences, but it reduced their significance.

The context of their forced diaspora also altered the relationships of Sindhis to their family gurus / *pirs.* Many Sindhi families followed spiritual teachers whose centers were close to the family home in Sindh. However, the dispersal of Sindhis separated many from their personal or family guru / *pir,* who often settled in another part of India or remained in Sindh. Such separation limited the regular association with the spiritual teacher, forcing Sindhis to connect with them through images and books. The separation especially restricted the ability of younger Sindhis to develop a connection to the traditional spiritual teachers of their family. Some Sindhis, therefore, followed a spiritual teacher whose center was convenient to their diasporic home in India, whether that teacher was from another part of Sindh or was even non-Sindhi. In cases when the master did not migrate, as in the case of most Muslim Sufis, or when the master was deceased and the shrine was located in Sindh, the physical separation became total. When Daswani's father migrated to India, he could no longer visit the original shrine of

Shahenshah without going through the complexities of international travel between India and Pakistan.

The dynamics of their dispersal around the world also altered the transnational character of Sindhi communities. While Sindhi traders almost always left their wives and children with extended family in Sindh before Partition, the changing political landscape limited their ability to return. When they adapted and took their families to settle permanently in other places, the nature of their diasporic community changed. For example, though Sindhi Hindus had been present in Sierra Leone since the late nineteenth century, a greater concern for religious and cultural issues developed in the Sindhi community when the wives and children of traders came there. New activities included forming a temple, conducting Sindhi language classes, and cooperating with Africans in the English medium schools (Merani and van der Laan 1979, 249–250).

The dispersal of Sindhis also meant the dispersal of extended families as many Sindhi Hindus have family members settled around the world. Instead of returning to Sindh for family events such as weddings, some Sindhis travel internationally for those occasions. Through such personal contacts as well as the Internet and international Sindhi organizations, Sindhis around the world draw on the experiences and resources of Sindhis in any country as they reestablish their lives in multiple locations. As Appadurai describes more generally, the modern development of Sindhi traditions draws on this movement of people and resources across international borders (1996, 33–37).

The Ideological Context of North India

In addition to general aspects of the Sindhi diaspora, the central location for this multisited study was North India, and more specifically Lucknow. Before addressing the details of the city of Lucknow, a consideration of the broader ideological context of North India reveals much about the context in which most of the Sindhi Hindus in this study lived. Being far from monolithic, media and political discourse in North India espoused a range of ideological positions that presented different definitions of religious traditions as well as other visions of society. In this complexity, however, particular understandings of the relationships between Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi traditions that challenged Sindhi Hindu practices held prominence through legal, symbolic, and ritualized representations.

The traditions that most people identify as Hindu have not always formed a single, self-evident religious system. In fact, Hinduism as popularly understood includes such a wide range of philosophies, deities, and practices that

scholars often argue that it is not a single religious tradition.[2] Even in the 1960s, before the issue of the construction of religious traditions became prominent in scholarship, Wilfred Cantwell Smith wrote about Hinduism, "The sprawling variety is deliberate and serious. There is no system to which something can be central" (1972, 25).

Since the term "Hindu" originally arose as a geographic designation for the region of the Indus River and beyond, scholars have debated when the term gained significance as a religious identification. Following the entrance of Muslims into the subcontinent, the term designated the native population of the region who had not converted to Islam, while the Muslims from outside India and converts to Islam were often termed "Turks," thus sustaining an ambiguity between ethnic, geographic, and religious identifications. Scholars argue over this ambiguity. Some scholars assert that, for example, Hindus and Muslims began to understand their religious practices as uniting them into distinct, pan-Indian communities during the British rule of India (Freitag 1989; Pandey 1992). Other scholars emphasize the religious aspects of Hindu identifications before the British, thereby contesting the suggestions that Orientalists constructed Hinduism (Lorenzen 1999). When used specifically as a religious term around the turn of the millennium, ambiguity remained. Some, especially within the Hindu Nationalist movement, identified Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism as Hindu because they are religious traditions "indigenous" to India, thus resignifying the regional meaning of the term Hindu. The more common usage, however, distinguished between these three indigenous traditions and Hinduism (Sharma 2002, 9).

During the period of British rule over India, the nature of Hindu traditions shifted. In response to both internal drives for reform and the critiques of Europeans, a variety of movements, including Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, questioned certain "Hindu" practices, such as caste restrictions and the treatment of widows. Other organizations, such as the Ramakrishna Mission under Swami Vivekananda's leadership, emphasized the responsibility of the urban middle class to address social issues (Beckerlegge 2000; Chatterjee 1992). In response to reformers, other Hindus attempted to use ancient traditions to legitimate certain practices, which thus spawned the designation *sanatan dharma* (eternal religion) to represent many traditional Hindu understandings. While these movements generally wanted to unify Hindu traditions, they ironically heightened the diversity that remained under that label.

The dominant ideologies of Hinduism at the time of my research fell into two generalized views. The ideology that Gandhi and Nehru utilized in the mid-twentieth century defined Hinduism as a tolerant tradition that respects the sensibilities of the followers of other traditions. Termed

secularist in the context of South Asia, this ideology moved beyond the ideal of religious freedom to draw on several components commonly recognized as Hindu, including the philosophy of Vedanta and the multiplicity of deities within *bhakti* (devotional) traditions. As these ideas recognized a commonality within the diversity of the world, participation in a range of traditions was possible without undermining a Hindu identification, as certain traditions of shared festivals in Lucknow demonstrated (*Hindustan Times* 2002b, 1; *Times of India* 2001b, 2). Nevertheless, the limits of this inclusivity within secularist Hindu ideology were implicit within these representations of Hindu and non-Hindu participation in shared festivals, as they assume a recognizable difference between Hindu and non-Hindu.

Another ideological view within Hinduism, Hindutva, has risen to challenge and, in some cases, overpower the secularist ideology. Identifying any tradition "indigenous" to South Asia as Hindu, this ideology sharply distinguished Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh traditions from Christianity and Islam, which were viewed as "foreign" religions that potentially threaten the nation's sovereignty. Using this ideology, N. S. Rajaram, a proponent of Hindutva at the time of my fieldwork, asserts that these foreign religions are dangerous and inferior to Hinduism. He directly states that the exclusivism of Christianity and Islam "has led them also to suppress all dissent—through violent means when possible," in contrast to the freedom of exploration that he attributes to the recognition of multiple paths to the divine in Hinduism (1998, 13).

Rajaram's reference to "violent means" illustrates a frequent Hindu Nationalist assessment of these non-Hindu traditions. Beyond rejecting special protections for religious minorities, Hindu Nationalists, including Rajaram, wanted to undo what they identified as the damage to Hinduism that the Muslim rule of India caused. For example, Hindu Nationalists wanted to rebuild a temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, that, they claimed, marked the Hindu god Ram's birthplace until the first Mughal emperor, Babur, razed it and built a mosque on its ruins. Concerning this conflict in Ayodhya, Rajaram complained that secularists wanted to whitewash the brutality of Muslim rulers (1998, 91).

Also during my fieldwork, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was the political party of the Hindu Nationalist movement, controlled both the Indian and the Uttar Pradesh governments. The BJP governments promoted Hindu Nationalist positions, including revising school texts that downplayed the negative elements of Muslim rulers and encouraging the rebuilding of the temple in Ayodhya. Particularly since Lucknow is the capital of Uttar Pradesh, these agendas and subsequent debates were prominent in the media there, which frequently published the opinions of both Hindu Nationalists and secularists. For example, an opinion piece written

by K. R. Malkani, a Sindhi proponent of Hindu Nationalism, dismissed objections to the BJP's insertion of "Vedic mathematics" and astrology into the secondary school curriculum (2001, 6). Similarly, another proponent of Hindu Nationalism repeatedly referred to Muslims as "rabid" and "fanatic" and identified Babur as a "murderous marauder" in an opinion piece concerning Ayodhya (Kamath 2002, 6). He squarely blamed the communal tensions on secularists who, he declared, hated Hindus and encouraged the Muslim hardliners to oppose the construction of the temple in Ayodhya. In an article about a month later, a participant in a protest against communal divisions complained about the limited media coverage of the protest, asserting that the media highlighted only Hindutva and hardline Muslim groups (Menon 2002, 6). Despite the protester's assertions, both ideologies repeatedly appeared in the main newspapers in Lucknow in various forms.

For the Sindhis, these competing ideologies increased their internal tensions. The success of Hindu Nationalism in Uttar Pradesh heightened the importance of their Hindu identification, as the political rhetoric connected a non-Hindu identification with a lack of patriotism and a rejection of traditional Hindu values. Similarly, the *Hindustan Times* in Lucknow published an article entitled "Sindoor: The Marketing of Indian Tradition," which discussed the rising prominence of "traditional Hindu family values" in advertising, television dramas, and movies (*Hindustan Times* 2001e, 10). Although many Sindhis also had an affinity for aspects of Hindu Nationalist thought, the secularist ideology matched their idealization of the harmony of Sindh, leading many Sindhis to operate within both ideologies to varying degrees.

Despite its political power, the Hindu Nationalist ideology, particularly the assertion that Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains were all Hindus, did not set the dominant definitions of religious traditions in India. The Lucknow edition of *Hindustān,* a Hindi daily newspaper, published separate articles regularly on the Jain, Sikh, and Sindhi communities that implicitly reinforced their status as distinct communities. Similarly, an article in the *Hindustan Times* referred to the veneration of images of the Buddha in two Hindu temples in Orissa as "a significant departure from tradition" (*Hindustan Times* 2002a, 8). Even within the Hindu Nationalist movement, political leaders compromised Hindutva ideology to leverage political power, such as when the BJP made an alliance with the Akali Dal, a Khalsa Sikh party that rejected the designation of Sikhism as a part of Hinduism.

Certain governmental positions and agencies, regardless of these competing ideologies, have formalized distinct boundaries between various traditions. The census, following the example of the British, assumes

particular boundaries as they request people to select a singular religious identification, including Sikh and Jain as separate categories from Hindu. Governmental agencies that oversee the management of endowments to religious sites distinguish between Muslim shrines, overseen by the Waqf Board, and Hindu shrines that the Muzrai Department manages. The legislation placing Sikh *gurdwaras* in the Punjab under the control of the SGPC similarly assumes a distinct boundary separating *gurdwaras* from other religious institutions and involves the government in declaring who is Sikh and, therefore, eligible to elect members of the SGPC.

The Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh communities also reject the definitions promoted within Hindu Nationalist ideology. For example, during my fieldwork tens of thousands of Dalits publicly converted to Buddhism in protest against "upper caste Hindu hegemony" (Mukul 2001, 6). Beyond its more specific political assertions, this conversion clearly recognized Buddhism as distinct from Hinduism. Most important for the purposes of this study, many Sikhs, reiterating the ideology of the Khalsa (the Pure, referring to Sikhs who have taken initiation according to traditions associated with Gobind Singh), forcefully argued for the recognition of Sikhism as a distinct religion from Hinduism. Madanjit Kaur exemplifies a Khalsa Sikh understanding of Sikh distinctiveness as he argues,

> Religions of Vedic origin are iconographic, introspective, and mystical. By this test, Sikhism, being a non-idolatrous, prophetic, and revelatory religion essentially imbibes the characteristics that distinguish its independent identity. And thus by implication, Sikhism is a non-Hindu religion (1998, 27).

Besides clearly showing a prominent Sikh position, Kaur's statement demonstrates that his assertion of the independence of Sikhism has opponents, thus confirming the competition between ideologies within the context of India. Similar assertions appeared in the media in Lucknow. The *Hindustān,* for example, published an article on Nanak at the time of his birthday celebrations. The author, who was a leader in the Sikh Young Men's Association in Lucknow, presented Nanak as the creator of a distinct religion, asserting "*Aise mahān dharma ke sansthāpaka guru nānak deva jī ek yuga pravartak the* (The founder of this great dharma, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, was the initiator of a new era.)" (Rajpal 2001, 13).

The competition between ideologies has surrounded the definition of Sikhism's relation to Hinduism for more than a century. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Punjab, the region of India where Sikhism flourished, Hindus and Sikhs debated, sometimes fiercely, the inclusion of Sikhism within the bounds of Hinduism. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant definition of Sikh traditions was, according

to Oberoi's research, "Sanatan Sikhism," which incorporated elements typically identified as Hindu and Sikh, much like Sindhi traditions do (1994). Oberoi argues that, in the late nineteenth century, another definition of Sikh practices that rejected many of these Hindu elements became the hegemonic Khalsa understanding of orthodox Sikh practices. Oberoi's assertions have raised deep objections from some Sikhs who emphasize their understanding of Sikhism as a separate tradition historically, which further illustrates the continued relevance of the debate over the boundaries of religious traditions in India (Mann, Sodhi, and Gill 1995).

The historical debate between Sanatan and Khalsa Sikh understandings developed in relation to issues of political and religious power. The designation of Sikhs as Hindus or as a separate community had implications for the Census of India, which had an impact on the distribution of resources and the allocation of seats in representative bodies during British rule (Oberoi 1994; K. Jones 1981, 92–93). Also, in the 1920s, Khalsa Sikhs agitated and eventually forced the British to enact *gurdwara* legislation for Punjab that shifted control of *gurdwaras* in Punjab away from the traditional caretakers who, according to Khalsa Sikh definitions, corrupted Sikhism with Hindu elements. The control of the *gurdwaras* and the continued vigilance of the Khalsa have made the understanding of Sikhism as a separate tradition from Hinduism prominent throughout India, though many Sindhis contest that understanding.

Other events have heightened the sense of Sikh distinctiveness since Partition. In the 1980s, Sikh separatists attempted to protect Punjabi Sikh interests through a violent struggle to create a separate Sikh nation. Indira Gandhi's order to attack Sikh separatists in the Harmandir in Amritsar in 1984 led to her assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, which then resulted in riots that further strained relations between the two communities and, ultimately, reinforced the sense that Sikhs formed a separate religious community.

The practices, architecture, and symbols that dominate Hindu and Sikh traditions contribute to the ideology of Sikhism as a separate religion. While Hindu temples typically have a *murti* of a deity in the various shrines, within a Khalsa Sikh *gurdwara* following the agitations of the 1920s no images of deities appear. Instead, in the center of a *gurdwara,* Sikhs typically place a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, which they honor as their living guru. Also, a significant part of the ritualized activities at a *gurdwara* is the *langar* (communal meal), which promotes interdining, regardless of caste. *Gurdwaras,* therefore, need large open spaces for both communal gatherings and for *langars,* while Hindu temples focus on the presence of individuals and families at the shrines. The trident atop most temple towers also differs from the *khanda* (a double-edged sword with

two daggers encircling it) atop *gurdwaras.* Each symbol clearly identifies an institution with a specific tradition. These visible differences reinforce the distinctiveness of each tradition, despite certain commonalities such as the significance of *prasad* (sanctified offerings that is graciously returned to devotees) and the inclusion of poetry of several Hindus and Sufis in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Another component of Hindu Nationalist ideology, the stark division between Hindu and Muslim traditions, did not prevent positive cooperation between followers of each tradition. In Lucknow and elsewhere in South Asia, both Hindus and Muslims regularly visited Sufi shrines, honoring the graves of *pirs,* and attempting to connect with their *barakat* (spiritual power). Several Sufi shrines in Lucknow marked this Hindu participation with the use of Hindi along with Urdu on their signs. One shrine even listed the "*Hindū Muslim Ektā Samiti* (Hindu Muslim Unity Committee)" as its main sponsor. The participation of Hindus and Muslims in each other's activities went beyond the Sufi shrines. Often friends and neighbors celebrated festivals together, with Muslims visiting Hindus on Diwali and Hindus visiting Muslims on Baqr 'Id. Because more prominent examples of cooperation diverged from common assumptions of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims, examples of Muslim participation in and even sponsorship of Hindu events appeared in the media as newsworthy items. One article referred to a Muslim who organized a Ram Katha as a "unique devotee of Allah and Ram" (*Times of India* 2001c, 5). Articles also reported the *iftar* (gatherings to break the daily fast of Ramadan) that politicians of various religious identifications sponsored to demonstrate their respect for the sentiments of Muslims (*Hindustan Times* 2001d, 2).

While these various discussions of Islamic traditions suggest a clear divide between Islam and Hinduism, despite mutual cooperation, both Sufis and non-Sufis sometimes downplay the relation between Sufism and Islam. Sufis often have conflicts with Muslim legal scholars over the Sufi emphasis on personal experience and union with the divine, which some traditional scholars have viewed as conflicting with the Islamic emphasis on the singular unity of God. While some of these scholars have declared Sufism outside the borders of Islam, some Sufi figures reject the limitation of Sufism to one religion, seeing it as more of a universal spiritual practice.

The rejection of Sufism's ties to Islam is not universal among Sufis, as many emphasize their Islamic identification. Often, Sufis connect their lineage to the family of Muhammad and defend their practices using Qur'anic passages. Many Sufis also emphasize traditional Islamic practices, such as ritualized prayers, respect for the Qur'an, the hajj, and burial of the dead. The Islamic heritage of Sufism remains fairly clear in the

architecture and symbolism of the shrines as well. The presence of a grave as opposed to a place of cremation, the green walls and flags, and the prominence of Islamic symbols, such as the crescent moon, Arabic calligraphy, and the number 786 (the numerological symbol for the Bismillah, the Arabic phrase that begins any recitation of the Qur'an) clearly distinguish these shrines from Hindu or Sikh sites. Mosques adjacent to the larger shrines further reinforce their Islamic heritage. While courts, Waqf Boards, and Muzrai Departments sometimes disagree over the identification of a site as Hindu or Muslim, the presence of these symbols or images of Hindu deities, along with the identification of worshippers, become a part of the argument (Sikand 2003, 64–65). Some non-Sufi Muslims also recognize the connection between Sufism and Islam. For example, Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the head of Nadwat ul-Ulama, an Islamic educational institution in Lucknow, emphasizes Sufism's Islamic heritage, defining it as "Islamic mysticism" (1980, 51).

Nevertheless, the debate surrounding the Islamic heritage of Sufism at times converges with Hindu Nationalist distinctions between religions indigenous to India from those foreign religions. Observing the tensions between Sufis and Islamic legal scholars, some colonial writers dissociated Sufism from Islam, connecting it instead with ancient philosophical ideas from various ancient traditions (Ernst 1997, 8–18). In some cases, these writers assert that the ultimate source of Sufi mystical approaches was India and Hinduism that "peculiarly cherishes that mysterious spirit of holy abstraction" (Malcolm [1815] 1976, 2:384). To justify the acceptance of Sufi traditions among many Hindus, some Sindhi writers have specifically argued that Sufism is "characteristically Indian" and accepts an "un-Islamic doctrine" of monism (Jotwani 1996, 159). As a way of dealing with Hindus participating in Sufi activities, L. H. Ajwani, in his *History of Sindhi Literature*, carries the un-Islamic nature of Sufism further, stating, "A purely Koranic interpretation could never have been acceptable to the Hindus of Sindh who also numbered themselves among the Sufis" (1970, 44–45). Therefore, his assumption that Hinduism and Islam remained separate drove his separation of Sindhi Sufis from the Arabic Qur'an. Such attempts to divorce Sufism from Islam and make it indigenous to India recategorize Sufism as Hindu, according to Hindu Nationalist definitions. Sindhi Hindus whom I interviewed, including W. H. Gurnani and Daswani, use such an approach to also distinguish between Sindhi Sufis and other Muslims.

To summarize, at the time of my fieldwork, the ideological context of North India included competing definitions of religious traditions. However, the continual reference to Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim as distinct identifications and the variations in architecture and ritualized activities

reinforced the differences between the three traditions and ultimately maintained the prominence of distinct definitions for each tradition. While clearly present, the influence of Hindutva understandings was limited. Hinduism was commonly defined as a tolerant and broad umbrella, much as Hindu Nationalists characterized it, but Sikh traditions, defined narrowly as a rejection of images of the divine and the veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib, represented a separate religion. Sufism, while also broad and tolerant of non-Muslim participants, generally emphasized Islamic traditions, which were sharply distinct from Hindu traditions. Within this ideological environment, Sindhi traditions were unusual. One non-Sindhi doctor specifically stated that he had never witnessed anything like the Sindhi institution in Lucknow whose free medical clinic he was assisting.

The Specific Context of Lucknow

Most of the Sindhi Hindus who contributed to this project lived in Lucknow. Situated in the Gangetic plain, Lucknow is the capital of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in India, which also is plagued by more poverty and illiteracy than much of India. Despite its current difficulties, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Lucknow was a major center for the arts and Islamic learning. At the time of my research, the city had a population of more than two million people, although urbanization made exact figures difficult as the city spread into the surrounding plains.

One tradition in Lucknow emphasizes its Hindu origins, claiming that Ram created the city for his brother Lakshman. However, the city is better known in modern history for its role in Islamic empires and society. Under the Mughal emperor Akbar, Lucknow became an administrative center for one portion of Awadh, a region that stretched across the Gangetic plain from Lucknow to Ayodhya. In the eighteenth century, the regional rulers of Awadh, the Nawab dynasty, played a significant role in the politics of the Mughal Empire. Ironically, when Nadir Shah and his Persian forces invaded Sindh in 1739, they faced a Mughal army under the command of the governor of Awadh, Sa'adat Khan, who founded the Nawab dynasty. Despite Sa'adat Khan's defeat in Sindh, his nephew Safdarjang (1739–1756) consolidated his family's power over Awadh and within the Mughal Empire, which his successors continued for decades. The region remained under the Nawab dynasty until the British formally annexed the region in 1856, although in the latter decades of the eighteenth century the British gained increasing influence over Awadh (Alam 1997, 26–30; Fisher 1997, 37).

When the Nawabs shifted their capital from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1775, they imprinted their traditions on the city and its culture, an influence still felt among long-term residents (Graff, Gupta, and Hasan 1997, 3). The Nawabs sponsored the creation of a variety of magnificent structures in Lucknow that highlighted their Shi'a Muslim heritage, and they patronized the arts, particularly poetry. Many Urdu poets who had lost the patronage of the Mughals following the decline of that empire migrated to Lucknow. The Nawabs also supported Shi'a scholars, who became the primary authorities among the Shi'a throughout the subcontinent, leading one historian to characterize Lucknow in this period as "India's most powerful regional polity" (Robinson 1997a, 196).

Lucknow also has served as a center for Sunni Islamic studies. Farangi Mahal, which Sunnis established at the turn of the eighteenth century, before the Nawabs moved their capital to Lucknow, became a prominent seminary among Sunni ulama and a source for literature frequently used in Indian madrasas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Robinson 1997a, 199). The Nadwat ul-Ulama was founded in Lucknow in 1894 to address the changing political context and the loss of power among the ulama. This organization created a school that incorporated traditional Islamic scholarship with aspects of an English education to empower the ulama to address contemporary situations (Robinson 1997b, 274–275). At the turn of the twenty-first century, this school continued to attract Muslims to Lucknow.

Spurred by the patronage of the Nawabs, Lucknow boasted a culture of hospitality and refinement. Muzaffar Alam connects this hospitality and interreligious tolerance to the Sufi concept of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (Unity of Being) that was prevalent in the empire of the Nawabs. This concept encouraged the acceptance of local practices and the inclusion of some Hindus in the Awadhi administration, though the Nawabs especially favored Shi'a Muslims (Alam 1997, 29; Fisher 1997, 43–44). During my fieldwork, local media particularly valorized a few examples of the continuing joint Muslim and Hindu participation in public festivals, relating it to "Ganga-Jamuni Tahzeeb," the attitude of refined hospitality and harmonious relations that historically characterized this region (*Times of India* 2001b, 2; *Hindustan Times* 2002b, 1). Recent issues of urbanization and communalized politics, however, have greatly diminished these traditions of Lucknow, leading long-term residents, including some Sindhis who arrived before Partition, to bemoan the changes in the city.

Lucknow is also particularly famous in Indian history for the Revolt in 1857, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny. The ruins of the British Residency, where Indian rebels laid siege to the British for 140 days, stand virtually as they were left after the suppression of the revolt, creating a

monument to an early call for the end of British rule. The British severely punished Lucknow following the revolt, and Lucknow's political fortunes declined.

Lucknow began to assert considerable political influence again at the turn of the twentieth century. Muslims from Lucknow held leading roles in the development of the All-India Muslim League, and the city hosted the 1916 Congress meeting where Hindus and Muslims negotiated a compromise, called the 1916 Lucknow Pact. The leaders of Farangi Mahal organized the early agitation for the Khilafat movement, including convincing Gandhi to participate when he visited Lucknow in 1919 (Robinson 1997a, 205–209). As these movements developed in the 1920s, other cities eclipsed Lucknow as focal points.

Beginning in the late 1980s, Lucknow's political landscape began to shift. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Awadhi heritage held, as Lucknow's religious communities maintained fairly harmonious relations, except for occasional conflicts between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. With the escalation of the controversy over the mosque / temple complex in Ayodhya in the 1980s and early 1990s, popular support for Hindu Nationalist positions increased in Lucknow (Graff 1997, 230, 255–256). In 1992, when Hindu Nationalists demolished the disputed mosque in Ayodhya, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh was a member of the BJP. When I conducted my fieldwork, the city was the home constituency of the prime minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was also from the BJP, thus illustrating the prominence of the BJP in Lucknow. Although the BJP sustained losses in other parts of Uttar Pradesh during the 2002 elections to the Vidhan Sabha (Provincial Assembly), which took place during my fieldwork, the party still won five of the six districts in Lucknow.

The Sindhi Presence in Lucknow

Sindhis Hindus had a presence throughout the metropolitan area of Lucknow. Many of the well-established families, particularly those who came before Partition, resided near the upscale Hazratganj shopping district in central Lucknow, which had its heyday in the 1920s. Several Sindhis owned large, fashionable clothing and jewelry stores in Hazratganj while many smaller shops were also Sindhi-owned. Many of those who arrived in Lucknow soon after Partition settled in the Chowk, the old part of the city characterized by narrow winding lanes, where they took over property left by Muslims who emigrated from Lucknow. Even a half century after Partition, one apartment building in the Chowk housed exclusively Sindhi families, and these families had influenced the businesses

around them, teaching the neighboring butcher, for example, to cut mutton in the Sindhi style. One major market in Aminabad, another old area of the city, also served as compensatory land to Sindhi and Punjabi refugees, who still ran most of the businesses in that market. Some of the Sindhis who had moved to Lucknow more recently had settled in the newer middle-class areas, known as the Trans-Gomti because they were on the opposite side of the Gomti River from the older areas of the city. Overall, most any area of the city had several Sindhi residents and Sindhi-owned businesses.

After Partition, several Sindhi families cooperated to build Sindhi Ghat, an area of small shrines leading to the southern bank of the Gomti. Stairs enabled devotees to cross over the floodwall and descend into the upper level of the ghats, where concrete slabs bore the names of early Sindhi donors. The first *mandir* (temple) on the upper level housed a small *murti* of the Sindhi deity Jhule Lal. The inscription above the shrine's door, which was written in both Hindi and Sindhi, named the Sindhi family that built the *mandir.* Close to the Jhule Lal Mandir was a shrine to Hanuman, who was highly popular in Lucknow. Wide steps led to the lower level where four other shrines were scattered across the platform leading to the edge of the river. The largest and most popular shrine honored Shani Dev, while the three other, more neglected shrines housed a variety of deities.

Though the area, particularly the Shani Dev shrine, attracted mainly non-Sindhis, the Sindhi community was proud of the Jhule Lal Mandir and their involvement in the development of Sindhi Ghat. Some of the community renovated the Jhule Lal Mandir in 2000, covering the orange concrete exterior with white tiles accented with maroon trim. The shrine was typically locked except for special occasions such as the New Moon or Cheti Chand, the Sindhi New Year and birthday of Jhule Lal.

The two dominant sites for Sindhi Hindus were built in the late 1970s in different parts of the city. The new building for the Harmandir, later called the Hari Om Mandir, was built in an area near Hazratganj, and the Shiv Shanti Ashram was south of the city center in Alambagh, with its own bustling markets and crowded alleys. Sindhis explained that the largest weekly gatherings at each site, on Sundays at the Hari Om Mandir and on Thursdays at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, coincided with the day that the businesses in each respective area closed. These two sites became visible symbols of the Sindhi community for both Sindhis and the broader population of Lucknow, as they dominated the media coverage of Sindhi events in local newspapers.

Other specifically Sindhi religious sites dotted the city, though few Sindhis mentioned them in interviews. The Kasturbai Nari Shala, the

charitable service organization that was the predecessor to the Harmandir, continued to operate in the rented space, just south of Hazratganj, where it had started soon after Partition. Prem Prakash Bhavan, a temple in the older area of Aminabad, attracted the devotees of the Sindhi guru Teoonram and his successors, especially for Thursday evening *satsangs* (devotional gatherings). Other Sindhi sites, including the Sukkur Sindhi Panchayat House and the Sindhu Bhavan, held occasional gatherings and special functions for the community.

Sindhis also frequented various temples and *gurdwaras* throughout the city that were not specifically Sindhi. Small *mandirs* are common on each block, while most neighborhoods in the Trans-Gomti region have a slightly larger temple for the middle-class residents. Some Sindhis visited the neighborhood temples close to their homes or businesses, while others frequented several larger temples that were generally devoted to Hanuman or Shiva. Various Sindhis also visited the *gurdwaras* that dot the city, with the largest *gurdwara* in Naka Hindola, between the city center and Alambagh. Sufi *dargahs* are also common in the city, ranging from the enclosed campus of Shah Mina's *dargah* near the Chowk to one-room roadside shrines not much larger than the saint's grave. Although these *dargahs* were convenient to Sindhis anywhere in the city, their devotion to particular Sindhi Sufis did not typically transfer to the Sufis of Lucknow. Individual Sindhis also attended *satsangs* of specific gurus, some of whom had ties to Sindh. Some of these guru movements, such as the Sadhu Vaswani movement, emphasized a Sindhi heritage, while others, such as the Sindhi gurus Lilu Didi and Asharam Bapu, did not emphasize their Sindhi heritage and attracted both Sindhi and non-Sindhi followers. Other Sindhis also participated in non-Sindhi movements such as Radhasaomi and the Ramakrishna Math. The Sindhi and non-Sindhi temples, shrines, *gurdwaras,* and movements represented part of the range of options that Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow could use to recreate their regional heritage.

Temporal Contexts

The period of my research was a tumultuous time for India, the United States, and the globe. While I was conducting fieldwork, the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 altered international relations in ways that became a major issue in India. Other significant events in the subcontinent also influenced the geopolitical context, the Sindhis, and me in specific ways and, therefore, influenced the observations and interviews that inform the bulk of this work.

Global Events

The morning after the September 11 attacks, the headlines on television, radio, and newspapers in Lucknow highlighted the events in the United States.[3] That focus continued for the next several months as the United States prepared to attack Afghanistan. Threats against American citizens in Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the world also received significant attention in the Indian media. However, any anti-American feeling in India was isolated. Most people were both sympathetic to the tragedy and supportive of military action. One non-Sindhi gentleman even questioned me about the delay in the military action against the Taliban.

Responses to September 11 in India connected to particular agendas in India's international relations. Several official statements from Indian leaders after September 11 highlighted their repeated requests for assistance against international terrorism and their sense that most governments, including the United States, had ignored India's concerns. The improving U.S. relations with Pakistan in the war on terrorism greatly irritated many Indians, as the United States asserted its right to attack anyone who harbored those whom the United States identified as terrorists but restrained India from attacking Pakistan, whom India identified as assisting terrorists in Kashmir.

The Indian perception of the American double-speak increased after an attack on India's Parliament on December 13, 2001, which India blamed on militants whom the Pakistani government allegedly supported. In response, India severed diplomatic ties with Pakistan and mobilized significant numbers of troops on the border. The United States continued to support Pervez Musharraf, the leader of Pakistan, while pressuring India to refrain from attacking. Although the United States pushed Pakistan to crack down on Kashmiri militants, many people in India remained skeptical of Musharraf's sincerity and ability to fulfill those pledges.

Despite these strains, I experienced no anti-American sentiments in Lucknow. The most obvious impact of these events was in representations of Muslims. One non-Sindhi explicitly told me that the attacks on September 11 were proof of the real nature of Muslims, who, he said, are raised to be violent. Almost as explicitly, Daswani and several other Sindhis associated Islam with terrorism and/or violence. Without September 11, I suspect that some of these individuals would have represented their feelings to me in different ways, and I doubt that I would have been as attuned to the implicit equations of Islam and violence in some interviews.

The military tensions following the December 13 attack on parliament directly affected some Sindhis, particularly when Indian officials closed the border between India and Pakistan a few weeks later. Since a few

Pakistani followers of Chandu Ram, the leader at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, were usually visiting Lucknow at any given time, the closure forced several devotees to return to Pakistan early. Demonstrating Sindhi defiance of that international border, however, one official at the ashram dismissed the significance of the tensions and closure, asserting that they had closed the border several times before and, when they reopen it, the devotees would return to Lucknow because "Guru-ji is here." Similar issues arose for the Pakistani followers of Lilu Didi and other spiritual teachers.

Events in India

Other issues affected the domestic situation in India. Elections for Uttar Pradesh's Vidhan Sabha proceeded in February 2002 without any major incident, though various party meetings and demonstrations created occasional logistical problems in the city. In an effort to negotiate more tickets for Sindhi candidates, a group of Sindhis held discussions with several parties, including the BJP and the Samajwadi Party. When those meetings failed to result in more Sindhi candidates, the Sindhi community as a whole had little influence on or interest in the election. Since no party established a majority coalition in the parliament, the state came under President's Rule for several months, an outcome that had a limited impact except for protests outside the main governmental buildings in Lucknow.

Hindu Nationalists also escalated agitations to force the government to rule on the disputed mosque / temple site in Ayodhya, as Prime Minister Vajpayee had promised. In September 2001, Hindu Nationalists began a new campaign to consecrate the pillars of the Ram temple that they planned to build on the disputed site. The following February, religious volunteers began to journey to Ayodhya for the ritualized activities that prepared the area for the construction of the temple. They came from across India in shifts, staying for a few days to participate in the preparatory events. Many of these pilgrims came through Lucknow's railway station or walked along the roads of the city carrying offerings to Ayodhya.

In the midst of this agitation, further turmoil erupted when a train in Godra, Gujarat, caught fire, killing some volunteers who were returning from Ayodhya. Reports disagreed on the details, including the agents of the attack and its nature as a response to harassment from the volunteers or as a premeditated attack, possibly instigated by Pakistan. Violence erupted in many parts of Gujarat and continued for weeks, with thousands of Muslims being murdered. To prevent the spread of violence beyond Gujarat, the government closed off Ayodhya and attempted to send the volunteers already there home under armed guard for their protection. The

ban on travel to Ayodhya was largely effective, though some continued to arrive as the rituals continued. By March 15, a compromise had developed in which a more limited ritual donation of the carved pillars took place, but construction did not commence. While the ultimate decisions in the case remained stalled, calm prevailed in Uttar Pradesh.

These various developments spawned the continued debate between Hindutva and secularist ideologies that highlighted the ideological context of North India. Sindhis expressed various attitudes toward the Ayodhya controversy. One retailer expressed support for the movement as he wondered why Muslims would not graciously return the land to Hindus, who, according to him, built the original shrine on the site. Jaya Bhambhwani, in contrast, completely dismissed the movement, contrasting it with the long and tolerant history of Hinduism. As with the various ideologies within Lucknow, among the Sindhis, no particular response to these events was universal.

The Place of Sindhis in Diaspora

The environment in which Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow reconstructed and represented their traditions included each of these contexts. These various global and regional events influenced Sindhi experiences and assertions at the time of my fieldwork, as did their representations of Sindh and its history, the complexities of diaspora, and the ideologies and traditions of Lucknow. Recognizing these multiple contexts is important in the analysis of the challenges that Sindhis faced and the variety of Sindhi practices and representations that they developed in Lucknow. The particular ideological context of Sikh and Hindu relations that led to Khalsa Sikh demands for an All India Gurdwara Legislation, for example, clearly influenced developments at the Harmandir / Hari Om Mandir. Meanwhile, Sindhi Hindus elsewhere faced many of the same challenges of diaspora, though each specific location had its own dynamics that Sindhi Hindus had to negotiate to establish their traditions.

Chapter 2

Debating Institutions

With his turban and beard signifying his Khalsa Sikh identification, Gurinder Singh concluded his Punjabi *kirtan* (devotional songs) with the exclamation, "*Guru nānak dev kī jay* (Victory to Guru Nanak Dev)." On a cool Sunday morning in January, the handful of Sindhi Hindus in the *satsang* hall of the Hari Om Mandir responded by exclaiming, "*Jay* (Victory)!" Singh's long beard and turban made him stand out from the Sindhi Hindus, who were generally clean-shaven and covered their hair with a simple cloth while in the *satsang* hall.

Taking Singh's place on the *divan* (raised platform), Lakshman Lalwani, a Sindhi Hindu musician, began his salutations to Nanak and the lineage of Chandu Ram, the Sindhi guru at the Shiv Shanti Ashram. He also expressed his devotion to that lineage by wearing a grey round cap embroidered with "S.A.R.," the initials of Sai Asuda Ram, the predecessor and father of Chandu Ram. After devotees responded to his exclamations with "*Jay* (Victory)," he began singing and exhorting the devotees in Sindhi, interspersing devotional verses with prose admonitions. Although he frequently exclaimed "*Tulsī rām* (Tulsi-Ram)," to which members of the community responded "*Shrī rām* (Lord Ram)," his presentation focused on a Sindhi Sufi narrative that encouraged everyone to become absorbed in the divine. This narrative described Sachal Sarmast, a Muslim Sufi of Sindh, chanting "*allāh hu, allāh hu* (God is)," to the chagrin of a particular *qazi* (Muslim jurist). By the conclusion of the story, the *qazi* had recognized Sachal's great devotion and followed his example. Within this story that drew on Sufi figures and themes, Lalwani inserted verses by Shah Abdul Latif, the most famous Sufi poet from Sindh, and argued that chanting "Allah Hu" and "Ram, Ram" equally connected the devotee with God.[1]

After Lalwani concluded with the exclamation "*Jhūle lāl*," J. V. Kumar, a non-Sindhi musician, took his place on the *divan*. He began by chanting "*Om nāmo śivāyā* (Om, Praise to Shiva)" several times before singing two Hindi *bhajans* (devotional songs) praising Krishna and Vishnu. Devotees enthusiastically joined in repeating the lines of "*Govindā bolo gopālā bolo* (Say Govinda, Say Gopala)," a *bhajan* focusing on Krishna.

After the devotional music, W. H. Gurnani, the *satsang* secretary, removed a copy of the Bhagavad Gita from the bookstand on the *divan* and read a short passage. He then presented his own commentary on the Gita. To conclude the discourse, the community meditated for a moment and then recited the syllable "Om" three times.

Following the discourse, several women began preparing for *arti* (a ritualized offering of light), lighting small lamps and placing them on round steel trays. They positioned one tray before each shrine along the walls, which housed *murtis* of deities, and before the central canopy that contained two copies of the Guru Granth Sahib and a copy of the Bhagavad Gita (figure 2.1). With the preparations completed, everyone stood and sang "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare* (Praise to the Lord of the Universe)," the standard song for *arti* in Hindu temples. A line of devotees formed in the center of the hall to take turns waving the lamp before the canopy. A few devotees also waved the lamps before the *murtis* throughout the song. *Arti* concluded with the temple's priest beating a kettledrum and blowing a conch shell. Everyone then chanted the names of the deities, while throwing flower petals onto the three books under the canopy.

While everyone remained standing, Krishna Anand, one of the older musicians, recited Ardas, a prayer that invokes the ten gurus in Nanak's lineage and is typically connected to the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib. The version recited in this *satsang*, however, excluded references that highlighted Khalsa understandings of Sikhism. In the appropriate portion of Ardas, Krishna Anand inserted particular requests for the community and individuals. Moving behind the Guru Granth Sahib, he then removed the gold brocaded cloth covering it and read a portion of the Gurmukhi text. As he finished, three generations of one family, a grandmother, parents, their young son and newborn daughter, approached the canopy. While the musicians sang a *bhajan,* the family spread a green and gold brocaded cloth over the Gurmukhi text as an offering. Then, Sona Gurnani (no relation to W. H. Gurnani), who assisted with *satsangs* regularly, placed a brown cloth under the Guru Granth Sahib before giving it to the baby. As they finished, the grandmother expressed her devotion as she stayed at the front to wave the flywhisk over the Guru Granth Sahib, an act which another devotee had performed since Ardas began.

Krishna Anand then slid to the middle of the canopy to read a passage from the Bhagavad Gita. At the same time, men removed pots of



Figure 2.1 Canopy in the Hari Om Mandir, Lucknow, India. Photo by author

food from under the Guru Granth Sahib to prepare to serve *prasad,* and a woman took the flame that devotees waved before the canopy to each person in the hall. Sona Gurnani led another recitation of the names of various deities. While musicians then sang a prayer to Lakshmi, most of the people present held up a corner of their clothing to receive the blessings of the goddess of wealth. The musicians concluded with a *bhajan* for Jhule Lal, as everyone lined up to receive *prasad,* which included chickpeas, fruit, and *halva* (an Indian sweet made from butter and flour often presented to the Guru Granth Sahib), which is commonly called *kara prasad* at *gurdwaras.*

Creating Institutions in Diaspora

This description of a Sunday morning *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir in January 2002 illustrates one way that Sindhi Hindus formed their traditions in the context of Lucknow. Although it presents only a portion of the variety present at the Hari Om Mandir, not to mention other institutions that Sindhis established around the world,[2] its composite nature reflects the ways that they developed their understanding of that heritage in relation to internal and external pressures that the community experienced in Lucknow. The musical and didactic presentations demonstrate this composite character, as the community incorporated multiple languages (Punjabi, Sindhi, Sanskrit, Hindi, and English) and ritualized activities typically associated with Sikh, Hindu, and Sufi Islamic traditions. Despite the composite nature of the *satsang,* its overall impact reinforced an understanding of religious boundaries through its construction of sacred space and the relations between elements that promoted the understanding of their heritage that they continued to construct in diaspora.[3]

Although this new ritual scheme performed Sindhi understandings of the boundaries of Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi traditions, the contrast between these practices and the dominant definitions of religions in Lucknow fostered the tensions that the Sindhi community had to negotiate. Beyond the concern over legal definitions of the institution that pushed the community to change the name of the institution, these pressures affected how leaders and devotees represented their institution and community to non-Sindhis and each other. Even though the inclusion of the term *mandir* in the new name is typically translated as temple, the Sindhis debated among themselves how to classify the institution. Was it a temple, a *gurdwara,* or some combination or distortion of the two? Since each of these terms suggested a specific set of characteristics in the larger society, based on the

dominant definitions, no commonly recognized designation in Lucknow fully represented the nature of the Hari Om Mandir.

The ritualized activities also reflected debates within the community about how to construct Sindhi traditions in new contexts. With a range of attitudes in the community concerning the debate between assimilating to the context of Lucknow and maintaining Sindhi traditions, however those traditions were understood, the activities at the Hari Om Mandir represented the attempts of the managing committee to address the range of interests and concerns among Sindhis. In other sites, Sindhis created institutions to address the needs and desires of their local Sindhi communities, all of which reflected the variety among Sindhi Hindus and the unique context of each location. Sindhi constructions of institutions and ritualized activities around the world reflect both the community's devotional concerns and their status as a minority community that was consciously aware of perceptions and critiques from non-Sindhis.

Constructions of Space in the Hari Om Mandir

My first impression of the Hari Om Mandir was the different architectural motifs that were visible from the street, as they related to multiple traditions and reinforced the difficulty in labeling the institution. An onion dome sat on top of the tallest portion of the facade. To the left of the onion dome, various shrines inside the front courtyard (A in figure 2.2) displayed geometric towers that were topped with tridents and Om's, thus reflecting the North Indian style of Hindu temple architecture. Visible behind the front courtyard with its shrines, Mughal arches capped with small towers and, in some places, miniature minarets adorned the roof over the main hall. These elements reflected an Indian design common to *gurdwaras* and Islamic sites in Lucknow. They were not commonly used on Hindu *mandirs,* except in Jaipur and areas that adopted that style of temple architecture.[4] Based on the history of the Hari Om Mandir and the inscriptions on the shrines in the courtyard, the North Indian Hindu style towers appeared to be later additions. The onion dome and the elements over the main hall reflected Sikh architectural motifs that connected with the centrality of Sikh elements inside the building when Sindhis first constructed it.

The community continued to increase the prominence of Hindu symbols on the exterior, pushing the Sikh images further into the background. During my fieldwork, artisans added a painted relief depicting Vishnu reclining on Seshna, a ten-headed cobra. Its position overlooking the courtyard reflected Sindhi assertions that recognized Vishnu as the source for the appearance of various sacred figures, including Jhule Lal

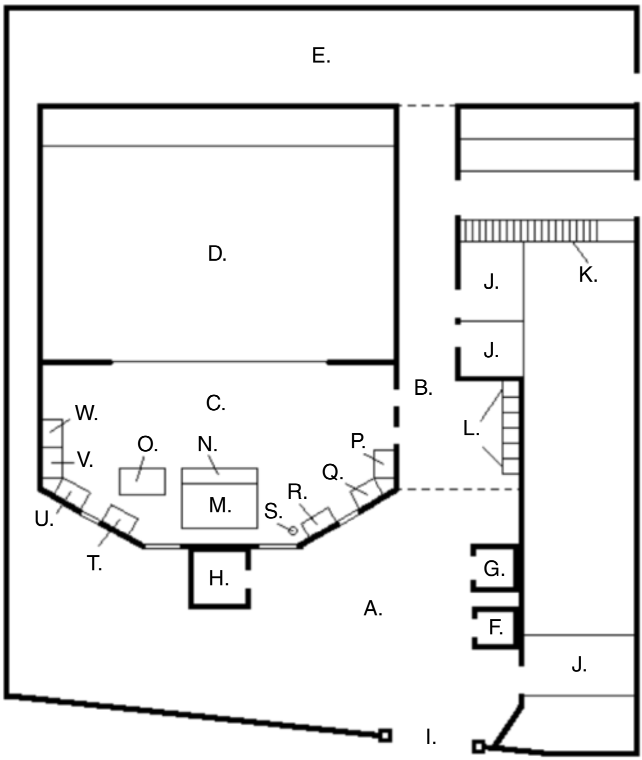


Figure 2.2 Diagram of the floor plan of the Hari Om Mandir

A. Front courtyard
B. Breezeway
C. Satsang hall
D. Auditorium
E. Rear Courtyard
F. Hanuman mandir
G. Shivlingam mandir
H. Jhule Lal mandir
I. Main Gate
J. Offices
K. Stairs to upper floor
L. Murtis of six spiritual leaders
M. Canopy
N. Pictures before the canopy
O. Musician *Divan*
P. Lakshmi-Narayan shrine
Q. Durga shrine
R. Ganesh shrine
S. Kali murti
T. Jhule Lal shrine
U. Shiva shrine
V. Radha-Krishna shrine
W. Ram Darbar shrine

and Nanak, while its bright colors and visibility from the street publicly emphasized the institution's Hindu identification. The sign on the temple gate was in both Hindi and English, thus conforming to the dominant linguistic context of Lucknow, in contrast to the Sindhi and Hindi sign on the Jhule Lal Mandir at Sindhi Ghat.

Stepping through the temple gate, visitors entered an irregular-shaped courtyard that contained three separate *mandirs*. The dating and placement of these *mandirs* revealed both the centrality of Sindhi traditions for the community and their willingness to absorb elements of the diasporic context. The Jhule Lal Mandir, which was chronologically the first in the courtyard (dated August 1988), contained a *murti* of Jhule Lal and an *akhand jyoti* (continuously burning lamp). This shrine held a prominent position in the courtyard (H in figure 2.2), abutting the back wall of the *satsang* hall near the central sacred point of the temple, the canopy (M in figure 2.2). The next earliest shrine (dated February 1990) housed a lingam that represented Shiva, a significant deity in both Sindh and Lucknow, with smaller images of Parvati, Hanuman, and Nandi along its interior walls. Less central in its location (G in figure 2.2), it was on the side of the courtyard, facing the Jhule Lal shrine, close to the breezeway and entrance to the *satsang* hall. The newest shrine (dated January 1992) contained Hanuman, his open chest revealing Ram and Sita on his heart. Perhaps because Hanuman was more central in Lucknow than in the traditions of Sindh, the shrine's placement on the right side near the entrance gate (F in figure 2.2) was furthest away from the locus of sacred power, the canopy, thus physically demonstrating its lower position within a new Sindhi hierarchy that incorporated some elements from Lucknow. These three shrines created a sense of progression from a Lucknow street to a popular deity in Lucknow, to an ever-increasing dominance of elements significant in Sindhi traditions. In practice, some devotees paid obeisance to the *murtis* with folded hands as they entered the temple complex, though only a few attended more carefully to any of the shrines.

Underneath the relief of Vishnu, between the entrances to the Shivlingam and Jhule Lal shrines, visitors entered a breezeway (B in figure 2.2) that connected the front and rear courtyards. Offices and other business areas of the institution were on the right side of the breezeway. On the left were the *satsang* hall and auditorium (C and D in figure 2.2), with a movable partition separating them. Shoes typically lined the wall of the breezeway on Sundays as people removed their footwear before entering the *satsang* hall. Throughout the week, and even during *satsangs,* this breezeway provided a meeting place for Sindhis to socialize. After *satsangs,* participants also took *prasad* in the breezeway.

Along the right wall of the breezeway, near the front courtyard, were six *murtis* of Sindhi spiritual teachers enclosed in glass-covered shrines (L in figure 2.2). The *murtis* were more than two feet tall with sculpted and painted clothes and beaded garlands. Placed above eye level, the images watched over the devotees. While some devotees folded their hands in reverence before these *murtis,* no one presented specific offerings of flowers, food, or light to them.

Above the *murtis* on the outside of the shrines, the name of each figure was painted in English, with an "Om" above each name and the donors listed beneath the images. The signs identified the saints as Bhagat Kanwar Ram (who was a predecessor in Chandu Ram's lineage), Sant Lilashah Maharaj, Swami Harnam Das, Sufi Sant (Dr.) Rochal Das, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, and Sai Teoonram. While each Om reinforced their Hindu identification, the titles of the leaders demonstrated the community's variety of elements. *Bhagat* is a variant of *bhakta* (devotee) that is commonly used in the Guru Granth Sahib. *Sant* connects to the North Indian *sant* movements that contributed to the understandings of Nanak, Kabir, and others. *Swami, sadhu,* and *sai* are also common terms for Hindu religious figures. Most notable, however, was the identification of Rochal Das as a Sufi. Because he was the disciple of a Muslim *pir,* Rochal Das retained both the designation Sufi and his Hindu identification. Despite the varied titles, these spiritual teachers had one element in common, their Sindhi heritage.

Members of the community described these figures in various ways. After one Sunday *satsang,* a regular devotee dismissed the importance of these men, who were "*sirph acche ādamī* (merely good men)"; instead, he preferred "*Om nāmo bhāgavate* (Om, Praise to Vishnu]." A few moments later, another regular devotee who frequently assisted with the distribution of *prasad* emphasized the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib. He also emphasized Kanwar Ram, describing him as a Sufi who served everyone.

Across the breezeway from the guru shrines, doors opened into the *satsang* hall. Dominating the center of the *satsang* hall, close to the wall adjoining the exterior Jhule Lal shrine, was the large canopy that housed the Bhagavad Gita in the middle and the Guru Granth Sahib in Gurmukhi and a Sindhi translation of it on either side (M in figure 2.2 and figure 2.1). Each text lay open with brocaded cloths covering them. The wall behind the canopy contained a mosaic depicting Nanak flanked by Ram and Krishna. Above the canopy was a three-foot-tall, brass Om in front of a finial. At the front of the canopy, a small area (N in figure 2.2) housed framed images that included two deities, Durga and Jhule Lal, two Sikh gurus, Nanak and Gobind Singh, and three Sindhi spiritual leaders, Kanwar Ram, Teoonram,

and Rochal Das, as well as a steel donation box. The photos had garlands around them, and some devotees specifically honored the images as a part of their expressions of obeisance. At a minimum, most devotees, when they arrived for *satsang,* bowed before the canopy and placed offerings into the box.

On the left side of the *satsang* hall, which was generally the women's side of the hall, were images of four deities. The two-foot-tall *murtis* included Lakshmi-Narayan, Durga, and Ganesh in three separate shrines and Kali on a pedestal (P, Q, R, and S, respectively, in figure 2.2). On the opposite side of the hall, which was the men's side, were four similar shrines, for Jhule Lal, Shiva, Radha-Krishna, and Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman (T, U, V, and W, respectively, in figure 2.2). Inside this Jhule Lal shrine were also two smaller images, one of Nanak and one of Jhule Lal.

These deity shrines clearly revealed the changes at the Hari Om Mandir since its original construction in 1977. They were neither symmetrical nor architecturally integrated with the original walls. The original windows in the diagonal walls of the *satsang* hall also interrupted the series of shrines on each side. The shrine for Durga was the only one inside the hall with a dated inscription. It was dedicated to the memory of a father and mother who died in 1976 and 1980 respectively, though no date of construction was given. The mosaic behind the canopy also had an inscription, which dedicated it to a Sindhi who died in September 1993. The Om over the canopy also appeared to be an addition, as it obstructed the view of the finial on the canopy. These additions, along with the exterior shrines that were dated between 1988 and 1992, were among the changes that the community had made since the mid-1980s to differentiate their institution from a Khalsa Sikh *gurdwara* due to the legal questions in India at that time.

The *divan* for the musicians usually sat between the canopy and the shrines along the right wall (O in figure 2.2), although they moved it to the women's side of the hall for a special gathering commemorating Durga Puja. The bookstand on the *divan* contained a copy of the Bhagavad Gita, the Dasam Granth (a compilation of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry), and other books that participants used occasionally. The community adorned each text under the canopy, all of the *murtis,* and the bookstand with coordinated brocaded cloths, changing them each week.

The arrangement of the images in the *satsang* hall reinforced a common Sindhi understanding that four figures, Nanak, Jhule Lal, Ram, and Krishna, were all incarnations of Vishnu. The mosaic gave a similar status to Nanak, Ram, and Krishna while the placement of the small image of Nanak in Jhule Lal's shrine connected those figures. When I asked Sona Gurnani about Nanak's presence in Jhule Lal's shrine, she at

first explained the placement as a matter of convenience. However, after a moment, she declared that both Jhule Lal and Nanak were incarnations of Vishnu, thus justifying the placement.

In this construction of ritualized space, the community expressed the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib. However, the additions to the original construction placed those traditionally Sikh elements under an overarching Hindu identification, most notably in the Om placed over the canopy. The *satsangs* and festivals at the temple continually negotiated the relationships between these elements. While the Guru Granth Sahib usually remained central, other elements gained prominence on certain occasions.

Satsangs and Festivals at the Hari Om Mandir

Of the various ritualized activities at the Hari Om Mandir, the Sunday morning *satsangs* were the main weekly event. As the *satsang* described at the start of this chapter demonstrated, these events intertwined elements commonly associated with Sikh and Hindu traditions, incorporating the poetry of Sindhi Sufis occasionally. *Satsangs* typically began with a turbaned Khalsa Sikh musician singing Asa Di Var (a composition by Nanak and his successor, Angad) that Sikhs traditionally sing in the morning. For about half an hour, various other musicians interspersed songs honoring Sikh gurus with songs praising Hindu deities and, occasionally, Sufis from Sindh.

W. H. Gurnani's reading of the Bhagavad Gita and presentation of its meaning was the most didactic component of the *satsang*. Occasionally, other members of the community presented other discourses in the place of the Gita. One woman, for example, occasionally presented her commentary on a portion of the Dasam Granth of Gobind Singh, thus demonstrating, along with the garlanded picture of Gobind Singh at the foot of the canopy, the community's veneration of other gurus in Nanak's lineage. Another devotee's lecture on diet and high blood pressure reflected community interests in various social, physical, and economic needs among Sindhis, as well as spiritual concerns.

Whichever type of discourse followed the devotional music, the community concluded this portion of the *satsang* with activities that, according to the dominant definitions, blended Sikh and Hindu ritualized activities. Chanting Om, waving lamps before *murtis,* and singing "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare*" are common actions within Hindu communities that deviated from the dominant Sikh interpretation of Nanak's teachings

(Dogra and Mansukhani 1995, 41). The waving of yak tails over the books on the canopy, which three devotees did throughout this portion of the *satsang,* is more common within Khalsa Sikh practices, though the placement of the Bhagavad Gita alongside the Guru Granth Sahib diverged from the Khalsa Sikh focus on the Guru Granth Sahib alone. Despite such departures from Khalsa Sikh understandings, the canopy remained central, even during *arti* when most devotees clearly preferred to perform *arti* before the canopy than the side shrines.

The response to the recitation of Ardas, which followed *arti*, further highlighted the importance of the canopy. Most of the people socializing or managing temple business in the breezeway joined the *satsang* for Ardas, and people generally remained more attentive. During Ardas, the community followed ritualized actions that were common in Sikh traditions, including standing, facing the canopy, reciting "*shrī vāhiguru* (splendid guru or divine being)," a phrase praising the formless divine, and bowing before the canopy. The insertion of specific requests for blessings at the appropriate point of Ardas further demonstrated that the canopy was the primary locus of sacred powers in the hall. These acts, considering the attentiveness with which everyone performed them, physically reinforced the prominence of the canopy to the participants.

Even during Ardas, the community diverged from the Khalsa Sikh form.[5] The Ardas that they recited came from a book of recitations that a Sindhi guru, Dada Chelaram, edited and published. In this version, Ardas begins with the standard references to the ten Sikh gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib. In the next stanza, Chelaram's version lists several symbolic groups in Sikh history, though the typical Khalsa descriptions of the acts are absent. From this point, Chelaram's version diverges further, excluding more strident and particular references, such as the Akal Takht (the five seats of religious authority for Khalsa Sikhs). In one stanza, for example, Chelaram's version replaces references to Sikhs who died for their faith with references to good deeds and honors those who "*dharma heta anek kashṭa sahārana kīte* (bear patiently many troubles for the sake of *dharma* [way/religion])" in place of those who served in *gurdwaras.* When Chelaram's version begins listing community supplications, the recitation mentions the emigration from their native land "*sāre jagata andar* (throughout the entire world)," while the term "*satsaṅg*" replaces the frequent references to the Khalsa. By excluding various elements specific to Khalsa understandings, Chelaram's version of Ardas reflects Sindhi understandings of Nanak and his lineage as a part of Hinduism and implicitly opposes Khalsa assertions that Sikhism forms a distinct religion.

Comparing the *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir to regular ritualized activities at Punjabi *gurdwaras* highlights other points where the Hari Om

Mandir's activities excluded Khalsa references. The diverse exclamations throughout the *satsang* honored deities such as Ram and various Sikh and Sindhi figures, including Nanak and Chandu Ram. In contrast, the typical exclamation at Punjabi *gurdwaras* focused on the Khalsa, saying "*vāhiguru jī ki khālsā, vāhiguru jī ki fateh* (Khalsa of the divine, victory to the divine)." At the conclusion of Ardas, the *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir excluded the exclamation "*sat shrī akal* (God is truth)" that is standard in Punjabi *gurdwaras.* As this phrase highlights Nanak's emphasis on worshiping the divine without anthropomorphic attributes, it clearly contradicts the emphases at the Hari Om Mandir.

The actions surrounding readings of the canopy texts demonstrated the greater importance of the Guru Granth Sahib over the Bhagavad Gita. The *granthi* (reader of the sacred texts) usually spent more time reading the Guru Granth Sahib than the Gita. Although the Guru Granth Sahib's lengthier composition necessitated a longer reading to complete the entire text in twelve months, the difference at the climax of the *satsang* suggested that the Guru Granth Sahib was more significant. When someone wanted to present a cloth, this action occurred between the readings of the two texts and always focused on the Guru Granth Sahib. I never observed similar donations to honor the Gita. W. H. Gurnani explained that the donation of cloths to the Guru Granth Sahib was often an act of gratitude after a request was fulfilled, implicitly confirming that the community identified the Guru Granth Sahib, not the Gita, as the central source of sacred power.

The primacy of the Guru Granth Sahib at the Hari Om Mandir became more apparent after the completion of its reading. In contrast to the attentiveness of the devotees to Ardas and the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, their focus became diffuse during the reading of the Gita. Several volunteers removed the food that had been placed beneath the Guru Granth Sahib, and another volunteer distributed the canopy's lamp to each devotee. Beyond the decreased attentiveness that these actions represented, the timing of the distribution of the flame and removal of the food clearly showed that the power of the Guru Granth Sahib and its recitation, not that of the Gita, had sanctified these elements.

The prayer to Lakshmi and a *bhajan* for Jhule Lal at the end of the *satsang*, according to the *satsang* secretary, primarily served to continue the divine thoughts while the volunteers prepared to distribute *prasad.* Although the attentiveness did not match that given to Ardas, most participants demonstrated the importance of the prayer to Lakshmi as they stood and held up the hem of their clothing. Several Sindhis in Lucknow and elsewhere have emphasized this as a Sindhi tradition to receive the blessings (i.e., wealth) from Lakshmi. While less important than the veneration of the

Guru Granth Sahib, the prayer to Lakshmi remained significant for many participants and seemed to symbolize their Sindhi heritage (including their financial successes) as well as their devotion to the goddess of wealth.

The languages used in the *satsangs* further demonstrated the diverse origins of the practices and the changing circumstances of their diasporic context. The Guru Granth Sahib that the *granthi* read was in Gurmukhi, a special script for Punjabi. Asa Di Var and many songs praising the Sikh gurus were in Punjabi, while other songs were in Sindhi or Hindi. The readings from the Bhagavad Gita were in Sanskrit, while the occasional Sufi compositions were usually in Sindhi. Announcements and discourses could be in Sindhi, Hindi, or English. While most of the devotees knew some of the languages, few knew all of them. The older devotees typically understood Sindhi, and a few could read Gurmukhi or understand Punjabi. However, middle-aged and younger devotees were typically more comfortable in Hindi and English. Therefore, the significance of these ritualized activities, particularly in uniting the community, primarily existed outside the verbal assertions made.

The placement and treatment of elements at the Hari Om Mandir established a clear hierarchy between the Guru Granth Sahib, the Bhagavad Gita, and the *murtis.* The focus on the canopy throughout the ritualized events, as seen in the preference for the canopy's lamp during *arti,* among other actions, clearly confirmed the centrality of the canopy. However, the treatment of *prasad* and the donation of cloths demonstrated the ultimate priority of the Guru Granth Sahib over the Bhagavad Gita, even though the Gita sat in the middle of the canopy. The inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita in the canopy and the ritualized treatment that it received raised it to a level close to, but not as high as, that of the Guru Granth Sahib. The deity shrines along the walls were even more peripheral in their placement and in the devotions they received. Although participants expressed their devotion to the sacred elements in various ways, seldom did anyone honor the *murtis* or the Gita without also honoring the Guru Granth Sahib. As participants expressed their devotion in these various acts, they experienced physically the complex hierarchy between the texts, the *murtis,* and the community. With devotees sitting on the floor and gazing up to the canopy and the Om towering over it, the placement of the Om in relation to the other elements reinforced Sindhi assertions that all of these elements were Hindu, outside of any verbal assertions that devotees might, or might not, understand.

This ritual scheme, however, was not inviolable, as special festivals at the Hari Om Mandir shifted emphases. Although I analyze the two main festivals, Nanak Jayanti and Cheti Chand, more fully in chapter 5, a brief description illustrates this variety. During Nanak Jayanti, the focus

centered on both the Guru Granth Sahib and the veneration of a Tulsi plant, which connected to the recitation of Tulsi Katha. For Cheti Chand, the focus was more diffuse, including the sanctification of offerings to Jhule Lal in the auditorium and special ritualized activities at both Jhule Lal shrines along with the regular veneration of the canopy. The celebration of Durga Puja one evening displayed the greatest difference, as the focus shifted away from the canopy to highlight the image of Durga in the side shrine almost exclusively. When they moved the *divan* to the women's side of the *satsang* hall, in front of the Durga shrine, the canopy became merely an obstacle for musicians to traverse to reach the *divan*. Unlike the regular *satsangs,* few devotees paid any attention to the Guru Granth Sahib during that event.

As a whole, the *satsangs* also enacted the equality of the devotees while emphasizing differences of gender. Neither community leaders nor wealthy supporters had an honored seat, as everyone in the hall, with the exception of a few elderly devotees, sat on the floor unless they were singing or speaking from the *divan* or reading from the canopy. With everyone covering their head in the *satsang* hall, no special vestments emphasized who would read, present a discourse, or sing. These arrangements rejected social distinctions based on caste or economic status, much like Nanak's teachings, while the separation of men and women resembled gendered arrangements in both *gurdwaras* and many guru movements. Nevertheless, anyone, male or female, could respectfully approach the canopy, touch the cloths, or even sit behind the Guru Granth Sahib and read it silently. Occasionally, women gave the discourse or led the public reading of the Guru Granth Sahib at the climax of a *satsang* or the conclusion of an *akhand path* (forty-eight hour, continuous reading of the entire Guru Granth Sahib).

Legal Debates and Historical Shifts

As the historical narrative in the Introduction illustrates, the Hari Om Mandir began as an institution housing only the Guru Granth Sahib, what traditional definitions might label a *gurdwara.* The original name, the Harmandir, and some of the early architectural elements reflected aspects of Sikh shrines, while the later changes in the institution highlighted the community's Hindu identification. Although the addition of shrines and other images to temples over a long period is common in India, what was unusual here was the addition of deities into an institution that maintained the Guru Granth Sahib at its center. Beyond highlighting the different understandings of Hinduism and Sikhism, the changes over the course of

the institution's history also illustrate both the external legal debates over the nature of the institution and the internal debates between maintaining traditions and adapting to a new context.

When I discussed the history of the temple with Gobind Wadhwani, a lawyer who served as the president of the Hari Om Mandir during the period of the name change, he proceeded to explain and defend the changes.

> I was president for 4 years of the Hari Om Mandir. You see, Harmandir is the name of the Sikh's main center, where the Akal Takht is in Amritsar. Our persons here kept the name of Harmandir. Some Sikhs wanted to link this temple with Amritsar. When we came to know of this, we called a general body meeting and amended our Constitution and changed the name of the temple from Harmandir to Hari Om Mandir.
>
> With full regards to the Guru Granth Sahib. We have the Gita as well as the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh's religious book. In a way, Sindhis are more Sikh than Sikhs themselves, because we perform [rituals] like the *akhand path*, a continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib. We have not taken out the Guru Granth Sahib but have changed the name. It was built by Sindhi Hindus, and we wanted to avoid any confusion, so we changed the name....
>
> But we are still keeping the Guru Granth Sahib. Also during my presidentship, we installed the idols of Bhagavan Shiva, from Brahma, Mahesh, Shiva, and Bhagavan Ram and Bhagavan Krishna, and Jhule Lal, the Sindhi's deity Jhule Lal....
>
> To give it a total Hindu touch, during my time, we installed these with the proper ceremony.

This characterization of the changes at the temple reflects a pragmatic rationale related to questions from external groups, most notably Khalsa Sikhs. They added a "Hindu touch" to clarify the nature of the institution. His assertion that his community is "more Sikh than Sikhs themselves" conveyed a sense of Sindhi superiority, even though its recognition of Sikhs as a distinct community implicitly undermined his assertions, at other times, that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism. This expression of superiority was particularly important in this context as it countered Khalsa Sikh concerns about insuring proper respect for the Guru Granth Sahib, a significant rationale for Sikh demands to manage any institution housing the Guru Granth Sahib.

His representations, however, also presented the changes as a somewhat conscious blend of diverse elements in the institution. This element of his representations became clearest in my first conversation with him, which took place in the Hari Om Mandir's *satsang* hall. He pointed to the Guru

Granth Sahib under the canopy and declared, "We Hindus take everything that is good, but the Sikhs are really Hindus." This use of "taking" implied that the item taken did not belong to them, in other words that the Guru Granth Sahib was not Hindu, and his statement makes clear that the taking involved a conscious choice about what was worth taking. While this first part of the statement reflects the influence of the dominant understandings of Sikhism as a separate religion, the second half represents his reemphasis of Sindhi understandings as a correction to the preceding statement.

I could not verify any specific attempt by Khalsa Sikhs to take control of this institution. Wadhwani's son, who was also a barrister in Lucknow, denied that any Sikhs had petitioned for control of the institution, although the community worried that Rajiv Gandhi's promise to enact the All India Gurdwara Legislation would place the Harmandir under the control of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). While Rajiv Gandhi never fulfilled his promise, the community's fears were not entirely unfounded. For more than a decade, a legal battle has raged over Guru Nanak Shewa Mandli, an institution in Karachi, Pakistan, which housed Hindu deities and the Guru Granth Sahib. A Sikh claimed that the institution was a *gurdwara* and therefore should be under the control of the Sikh community, while a group of Sindhi Hindus maintained their claim to the institution (*Dawn* 2005; *Eastern News* 2005).

Beyond the issue of fearing Sikh claims to the institution, the community at the Hari Om Mandir increasingly expressed their relation to the deities commonly associated with Hinduism. Particularly as their children grew up in an environment that highlighted the stories of various deities, the experiences of Sindhis in Lucknow fostered greater commitments to these elements. Another member of the management committee at the temple, R. D. Gurnani, asserted, "Children study with other Hindu students who are worshipping all the gods like Ganesh, Krishna, Ram and like Shankar Bhagavan, Shankarji." In this dynamic, the Sindhi desire to connect with the majority Hindu population, as their children studied with "other Hindu students," increased the hegemony of the dominant definition of Hinduism, as younger Sindhis identified the activities of their peers as the norm that Sindhi traditions needed to match. Therefore, the internal pressures of a community adapting to diaspora were also important in some of the changes.

Beginning in the late 1990s, a new *satsang* secretary, W. H. Gurnani, added the discourse on the Bhagavad Gita and included an increasing amount of Hindi in devotional songs. These changes further enacted the emphasis on their Hindu-ness that the diasporic context encouraged. Although the changes increasingly emphasized elements of mainstream Hinduism, the continuing centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib in relation to those elements more fully enacted the general Sindhi understandings that had developed,

connecting Nanak, the Guru Granth Sahib, and deities, than the original activities at the Harmandir did.

Hindu reform traditions also informed the development of the institution. The foundation of the institution after Partition as a component of a charitable organization serving widows revealed that the spiritual components were an after-thought to the larger concern of social service. Some leaders continued to maintain that focus after the construction of the new building in 1977, when they began to establish programs of community and charitable service separate from the original Kasturbai Nari Shala. The Hari Om Mandir supported destitute households with monthly financial assistance, sponsored subsidized medical care, assisted poor women with the expenses of marriage, and paid tuition for needy students, as well as allowing non-Sindhi groups to use their facilities. Reflecting the discourse of modernized, reformed Hinduism, several leaders directly represented these activities as more important than the ritualized events, thus contributing to community debates over the institution's identification, which I discuss more fully below.

Although the community related the institution's origins to a Hindu Sufi, elements associated with Sufi traditions were not particularly prominent within the development of the temple. The insertion of Sufi music into the *satsangs* was only an occasional addition, unlike the veneration of Nanak and various deities. The installation of the *murtis* of gurus / Sufis in July 1999, replacing the temporary images that had occupied a rear corner of the *satsang* hall, demonstrated the community's veneration of figures whose identifications connected variously to Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi terminology. Although they repeated Rochal Das's identification as a Sufi Sant on his shrine, the uniqueness of this identification among the six and the peripheral nature of these shrines to the devotional activities meant that a Sufi identification had little impact on representations of the institution. Moreover, since Rochal Das remained Hindu while following a Muslim *pir,* this label particularly enshrined a Sindhi understanding of Sufism as a union with the divine that transcends religious borders.

Representations of the Hari Om Mandir

This history of changes and the varied elements in the Hari Om Mandir created an implicit debate over the representation of the institution, whether to categorize it as a temple or a *gurdwara.* When the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh arrived for Nanak Jayanti, one participant clearly recognized the site as a *gurdwara,* stating, "In the *gurdwara,* all people are equal, so here he is not Chief Minister." In contrast, R. D. Gurnani clarified at the previous

day's events for Nanak Jayanti, "In a *gurdwara,* only the Guru Granth Sahib. We call this a temple because we have other gods, statues." Other Sindhis placed the institution in a liminal position between temples and *gurdwaras.* V. L. Advani, another leader of the institution and a disciple of Rochal Das, had lived in Sindh but did not remember any site housing both the Guru Granth Sahib and the *murtis.* He then suggested that the Hari Om Mandir was a *mandir* and *gurdwara* together. B. S. Balani, who, along with her husband, was a successful retailer in Lucknow, contrasted the Hari Om Mandir with the Sindhi-directed "proper *gurdwara*" she had attended as a child in Kanpur. When I asked her what she meant by "proper," she explained that the *gurdwara* in Kanpur had no images of Hindu deities.

Although Balani's assertions contained an implicit critique of the institution, her attitude did not reflect a dislike for these traditions. The implicit critique seemed to arise primarily from a lack of appropriate terminology, which illustrated the limiting power of language within the Sindhi community. The terminology present in the general vocabulary of Lucknow, in either Hindi or English, correlated with the predominant definitions of religions. Temples housed Hindu deities, and *gurdwaras* housed the Guru Granth Sahib. The absence of an accurate term to categorize the Hari Om Mandir hampered the ability of Sindhis to resist the hegemony of the dominant definitions as they represented their practices and institutions to non-Sindhis. They were forced to label their institution with a term that held connotations that did not fit.

The history of the temple also created concerns for leaders as they represented the institution. While Gobind Wadhwani animatedly described the community's preemptive actions to maintain Sindhi control of the temple, other leaders were less straightforward. Several times when I questioned central leaders during my fieldwork, they dismissed any significance to the name change. A. C. Hemnani, the president of the temple during my fieldwork, connected the name change to the new building, suggesting that a new building needed a new name. The *satsang* secretary, W. H. Gurnani, asserted that the change was necessary because only one institution in India could use a name, as if the Harmandir in Amritsar had trademarked it. As neither man was an active leader at the time of the changes, their responses demonstrated either uncertainty about the context behind the changes or, more likely, an intentional attempt to downplay this aspect of the temple's history to an outsider.

These limited responses about the history of the temple correlated with an initial reticence of some Sindhis at the Hari Om Mandir to participate in my research, which later dissipated. On one occasion, a leader abruptly stopped a worker at the temple from talking to me, asserting that I needed to apply to the managing committee for information. When I

did so, A. C. Hemnani provided me with a limited amount of information and advised me to study at the Indian Institute of Sindhology, where they could "answer all of my questions." More than simply a desire to avoid discussing the temple's history or a reluctance to spend time and energy in interviews, these efforts correlated with significant uncertainties within the community about their relation to their heritage. Several Sindhi leaders claimed that Sindhis in other communities did things properly. The external challenges in diaspora and the internal pressures to adapt to the context of Lucknow contributed to a sense that the traditions they constructed failed to match the "real" Sindhi traditions that they assumed existed elsewhere.

Published Representations

Although representations of the Hari Om Mandir that appeared in newspapers and temple publications presented the combinations in the temple's activities with little explanation, facets commonly recognized as Hindu dominated the publications. Elements that the dominant understandings defined as Sikh were typically secondary, while those components connoting a Sufi identification seldom appeared at all. With their concerns over the *gurdwara* legislation and their desire to highlight a Hindu identification, the media representations generally ignored the internal debate about the appropriate label for the Hari Om Mandir, never referring to it as a *gurdwara*.

The institution received prominent attention in an intermittent series of articles in the Lucknow edition of the *Hindustān* entitled "*Sindhī Samāj* (Sindhi Society)." Over a period of four months, sixteen of the fifty-one articles in the series specifically discussed activities at the institution. This prominence reinforced the centrality of the institution among Sindhis in Lucknow and reflected the assertions of many Sindhis who, when I asked about Sindhi religious activities, referred me to the Hari Om Mandir.

Presenting it as a tolerant Hindu institution that addressed social needs, the articles connected the community with modern Hindu reform traditions and their positive social impact. A "*Sindhī Samāj*" article from September 22, 2001 presented a general description of the institution while recognizing its eclectic nature in an ambiguous title, "*Hari om mandir sabhī sampradāyon kī āsthā kā kendra* (Hari Om Mandir is a center of respect/faith for all religious communities)." Never explicitly expanding on the meaning of the title or the extent of its inclusivity, the article listed the temple's various devotional objects and festivals, with elements commonly defined as Hindu dominating both lists. The Guru Granth Sahib and Gobind Singh Jayanti were the

only elements commonly defined as Sikh in either list. The article's only reference to Sufism came when it identified Rochal Das as a "Sufi Sant." Repeating the leaders' frequent emphases on charitable activities, the article concluded with a listing of the temple's social services.

The various articles in the series that described specific events similarly placed greatest emphasis on elements commonly defined as Hindu. The article that gave the fullest account of a Sunday morning *satsang,* primarily paraphrased W. H. Gurnani's discourse on the Gita, with the last quarter of the article listing other elements in the *satsang.* Since the references to elements commonly associated with Sikh traditions, including Asa Di Var, Ardas, and Vachan Sahib (reading of the Guru Grant Sahib), were interspersed with elements usually recognized as Hindu, the article downplayed the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib without excluding its presence (2001b, 6). While six separate articles detailed the observance of Nanak Jayanti at the institution, all of them balanced the veneration of Nanak with references to the veneration of the Tulsi plant or other elements associated with Hindu traditions (2001c, 6; 2001d, 6; 2001e, 6; 2001f, 6; 2001g, 6; 2001h, 4).

Other newspaper references to the Hari Om Mandir generally emphasized components typically related to Hindu traditions. English language newspapers included announcements for Mahashivaratri and Holi celebrations at the temple. One of the two announcements of Nanak Jayanti in the *Hindustan Times* diverged from this trend, as it described the veneration of Nanak only, while the other announcement also mentioned the recitation of Tulsi Katha (2001b, 3; 2001c, 3). Newspaper announcements related to non-Sindhi functions at the temple, such as activities of the Vedanta Mission and the followers of Satya Sai Baba, reinforced the community's Hindu identification by publicizing Sindhi contributions to the broader Hindu society (*Hindustān* 2001, 6; *Hindustan Times* 2001a, 3).

These various newspaper articles and announcements presented the views of a few Sindhi leaders, filtered through the understandings of the newspaper staff. For example, W. H. Gurnani, the *satsang* secretary, confirmed that he periodically gave the reporter who authored the series of articles information about the *satsangs,* including synopses of his discourses, and provided additional information on Sindhi culture. In our conversation, the non-Sindhi reporter attributed many of the articles on Sindhi spiritual figures to information from a book that Gurnani lent him. Since many articles in the series drew directly on Gurnani's representations, while other articles described interviews with other leaders, the Hindu dominant representations reflected, at least partially, the image that certain Sindhi leaders wanted to display in the media.

Although the prominence of Hindu and Sikh symbols in the programs and announcements that the temple published varied according to the

occasion, fliers for traditionally Hindu festivals incorporated only symbols associated with Hinduism, such as the Om. On the other hand, fliers for Nanak Jayanti incorporated symbols typically connected to both Hindu and Sikh traditions. The most impressive publication was the four-page, full color program for Nanak Jayanti, which in itself highlights the centrality of Nanak for the community. A large image of Nanak adorned the front, which several Sindhis displayed in their shops alongside other devotional images, and the invitations and schedules appeared in Sindhi, Hindi, and English. Despite Nanak's centrality, the program included both an Om and the Ik-Om-Kar (Gurmukhi calligraphy depicting an Om and numeral one), which is usually identified as a Sikh symbol. Clearly, the published representations of the Hari Om Mandir, both in the media and from the community itself, did not ignore the aspects of the institution that fit with the dominant definition of Sikhism. However, seldom did these elements appear without some reference to elements commonly recognized as Hindu. Perhaps more significantly, the representations did not reflect the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib in the ritual scheme of the Hari Om Mandir.

Debates among Leaders

In interviews with several leaders of the Hari Om Mandir, these debates over the nature of the institution extended to differing representations of Sindhi Hindus more broadly, making their statements more complex than the published accounts. The competing influences of the dominant definitions and the general Sindhi understandings affected the statements of these leaders as they emphasized alternately Hindu and Sufi labels and, like Gobind Wadhwani's assertions, switched between the different discourses. In these selected statements, some of the variety of responses to the dominant understandings of the borders separating Hinduism, Sikhism, and Sufism among Sindhis in Lucknow become apparent.

Early in my research, I interviewed B. K. Thadani, a prominent retailer in Lucknow. He was born in Mumbai before Partition, as his family had business interests there as well as in Lucknow and Sindh. After Partition, they left Sindh permanently. Thadani's family had provided significant leadership for the establishment of the Kasturbai Nari Shala in Lucknow, and he continued to serve on the managing committee of the Hari Om Mandir, though he did not attend *satsangs* regularly. At the front counter of Thadani's store, several images, including Jhule Lal, Nanak, and Kanwar Ram, adorned the walls, together highlighting the Sindhi heritage of his family.

From the beginning of our interview, he clearly anticipated a focus on the broader community and understood his position as representing Sindhis as a whole. For this purpose, he invited A. C. Hemnani, the president of the Hari Om Mandir, to participate in the interview to "provide further information." Hemnani, however, was delayed in traffic and arrived after we began our conversation.

In response to my interest in religious practices, Thadani repeatedly emphasized an inclusive Hindu identification.

> Religiously we follow *sanatan dharma,* and the scope of our belief is very widespread. We believe in practically every god that usually every Hindu believes in. For example, Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, Sri Ganesh, Lakshmi, Durga, Lord Vishnu, and great saints like Guru Nanak, and our own deity, Jhule Lal.

His use of plural pronouns confirmed his intent to represent the broader community. Although the defensiveness that frequently arose in interviews was not as explicit here, his insertion of "practically" and "usually" qualified his equation of Sindhi practices with those of "every Hindu." By including Nanak within lists of traditionally Hindu figures, which he repeated several times in the interview, he placed Nanak within the borders of Hinduism. Later in the interview, when I asked him if he followed any specific saints, he reiterated the inclusive nature of their practices. He went further to emphasize a tolerant form of Hinduism that rejects fanaticism and includes a focus on the "welfare of humanity," thus reflecting reformed Hindu understandings that arose in the colonial period and apparently influenced his family's support for the formation of the Kasturbai Nari Shala.

After Hemnani arrived, an interesting exchange between Thadani and Hemnani reflected the debate over appropriate labels. Hemnani began by linking Sindhi inclusiveness to a Sufi identification. He asserted, "We are actually Sufis. We believe in all religions; this is Sufism. We harm none, worship all. We do not murder people." Hemnani's use of the word "actually" highlighted his assumption that I would not recognize Sindhis as Sufis since his use of the term diverged from the prevalent definitions. By identifying Sufism with "all religions," he separated the term from its common connection with Islam, reflecting the assertions of some colonial writers and other Sindhis (Malcolm 1815, 384; Jotwani 1996, 159). Less than a month after the September 11 attacks in the United States, I interpreted his concluding sentence as an implicit contrast with the pervasive portrayal of a militant Islam in the Indian press at that time. Thadani, on the other hand, did not want me to get the wrong impression, so he reacted

to Hemnani's assertion about Sufism by immediately reemphasizing the Hindu identification as he repeated that Sindhis follow "all Hindu gods and saints." This exchange clearly highlighted the debate over the different labels that each leader wanted to emphasize.

In contrast to Hemnani's alternative definition of Sufism, the prominent understanding of the differences between Hindu, Sikh, and Islamic traditions dominated Hemnani's other assertions during our discussion of my research plans. Wondering about my intentions, Hemnani asked what, specifically, I was studying. After I responded, "Sindhi religious practices," he remained dissatisfied, asserting, "But Sindhi is not a religion; Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism are religions. You should decide which religion you want to study!" This exclamation shifted the discussion into a frame of reference that followed prominent categorizations, treating Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism as three distinct traditions. While he might have intended Sikhism as a subgroup of Hinduism, the absence of any other Hindu subgroup, such as the Arya Samaj or Vaishnavism, implied that Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism were similarly distinct religions. His statement that Sindhi traditions did not form a separate religion supported Thadani's representation that their practices were Hindu, since identifying Sindhi traditions as a separate category would have undermined their claim to connect with the Hindu majority. However, he did not simply assume that studying Sindhi practices meant that I was studying Hinduism. Moreover, Hemnani's emphasis on Sufism is absent from this exchange. If I had told him that I was studying Sufism, I am not certain if he would have suggested that I go to Islamic shrines in Ajmer or would have readily accepted my project as being about Sindhi activities, as he had suggested in his earlier reference to Sufism. Like the debates surrounding the type of institution that the Hari Om Mandir represented, such shifting labels and categories illustrate well both the challenges that Sindhis faced as they represented their traditions to non-Sindhis and the hegemony of the dominant definitions that simultaneously pressured Sindhis and was defied by Sindhis.

Although Hemnani and Thadani differed on the use of the Sufi identification, my questions about Sindhi Hindu ritualized activities brought together their interests in representing the community, as my questions differed from the image of charitable service that they wanted to highlight. When Thadani initially began discussing the Hari Om Mandir, he declared, "We have the Hari Om Mandir as a symbol of our Sindhi contribution in the field of Indian religions, Hinduism, one Hindu religion, and we conduct various social activities under that banner." Having restated his description to emphasize a unified Hinduism, he quickly shifted to his central concern and proceeded with a description of the institution's

economic, medical, and social services for poorer Sindhis. In a conversation with Hemnani a few weeks later, he similarly disliked my questions about specific festivals, arguing, "These festivals are only formalities. The real importance here at the temple is serving other people." By pushing the focus to social service, he connected the community's activities with a rational, benevolent attitude that contrasted with ritualized activities that some Indians, and colonizers in an earlier era, frequently decried as "superstition." While highlighting their modern, rational bases to me, an American outsider, may reflect their assumptions about my attitudes, this emphasis was more than a discursive ploy. It connected with the limited participation of many temple leaders, including both Thadani and Hemnani, in ritualized events. While Thadani seldom attended *satsangs,* Hemnani and many leaders who regularly attended often conducted temple business or socialized in the breezeway until the climax of the *satsang* with Ardas.

Another leader at the Hari Om Mandir, W. H. Gurnani, illustrated other emphases among the leaders. Unlike Hemnani and Thadani, W. H. Gurnani did not downplay the importance of ritualized activities. As the *satsang* secretary, Gurnani's responsibilities centered on ritualized activities, including organizing the musicians and other participants each week. His leadership of the *satsangs* reflected aspects of his life choices in the context of diaspora. He was born in Quetta, near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, where his ancestors had migrated earlier from Sindh. After Partition, his family migrated to India, where Gurnani chose to pursue a master's degree in Hindi, the language of his new home. He bridged this training in Hindi with his commitment to Sindhi traditions in several ways. He facilitated the increasing incorporation of Hindi elements in the *satsangs* while maintaining the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib. He also expressed his commitment to the Guru Granth Sahib by translating a book describing its teachings into Hindi. His other activities also reflected his relation to both Sindhi traditions and aspects of his diasporic context, as he visited the Shiv Shanti Ashram on most Thursdays and served as vice president of the Vedanta Mission in Lucknow.

In our first interview, which took place sitting in the *satsang* hall of the Hari Om Mandir, he, much like Thadani, emphasized the Hindu-ness of the community. He referred to their traditions as "*vaidik dharma* (Vedic traditions)" and connected the Sindhu River to the origins of the term Hindu. This emphasis on the Hindu identification may have influenced another change he institutionalized as *satsang* secretary, the addition of the Bhagavad Gita discourse.

Demonstrating his engagement with the philosophical traditions that these elements presented, Gurnani explicitly recognized the contradictions

within the practices at the Hari Om Mandir. Surrounded by the various images in the *satsang* hall, he explained,

> *Vaidik dharma, ham log vaidik dharma ko pūrī tarah se mānate he. Aur nirākār īśvar ke upāsak hai. Nirākār īśvar kī upāsanā mė guru granth sāhib hamārā pūrā kā pūrā nirākār bhakti kī kahānī hai. Sākār īśvar me rām kr̥shnā ko mānate haĭ. Vaise hamārī bhakti nirākār hai. Ham yā to jal devatā kī upāsanā karte haĭ yā phir guru granth sāhib kī upāsanā karte haĭ. Jisme nirākār bhakti ke liye nirdaś hai sākār ke liye nahīn hai. Lakshmī gaṇeś hai rām sītā hai rādhā kr̥shnā hai. Kyoṅki agar upāsanā kartī hai to kahī to lakshya rakheṅge. Sākār ke liye upāsanā cālū kī dhīre dhīre.*
>
> (Vedic dharma, we follow Vedic dharma a lot. We are devotees of the formless god. In worship of the formless god, Guru Granth Sahib tells us everything of devotion to the formless. In [devotion to] gods with form, Ram, Krishna are celebrated. Otherwise our devotion is to the formless. We are worshipping either water god or worshipping Guru Granth Sahib, in which is instructions only for devotion to the formless, not for devotion to gods with forms. [Pointing in room] There is Lakshmi, Ganesh. There is Ram-Sita. There is Radha-Krishna. Because, if you worship, then where will the object be? Worship for gods with forms slowly, slowly became active).

In the various interviews, this statement most directly addressed the tension between the dominant interpretation of the ideals of the Guru Granth Sahib and the practices within the Hari Om Mandir. After acknowledging the Vedas, Gurnani shifted his emphasis to the formless ideal, which he associated with the Guru Granth Sahib. He then proceeded to qualify the formless ideal with his references to the various deities present in the room, suggesting that such contradictions represented an understandable development. These two, seemingly contradictory strands both fit within Hindu understandings of the divine and reflect a common tension in the *sant* tradition that Nanak, Kabir, and others propounded.[6] While the term *nirakar* (without form) is a Sanskrit term, Gurnani's connection of the term with the Guru Granth Sahib placed the formless in the context of Sikh religious thought rather than in the context of the Upanishads and Vedanta.

The implicit assertion in the previous quote, that the Guru Granth Sahib was related to Hindu traditions and the Vedas, became explicit in other parts of my interviews with Gurnani. When listing festivals at the Hari Om Mandir, he related Nanak Jayanti, Ramnaumi, Shivaratri, and Janmasthami each to Vedic traditions and identified Nanak as an avatar of Vishnu. Such categorizations explained how he, a follower of "Vedic dharma," considered the use of a *lanvan* (wedding ceremony involving the

Guru Granth Sahib) as an acceptable, and cheaper, alternative to the Vedic *havan* (Vedic fire ritual). In fact, his wedding and the weddings of his two daughters incorporated a *lanvan* while his son had a *havan* at his wedding. In a similar way, he identified Sufi traditions as drawing on Hindu ideals when he asserted, "*Un sūfiyon ne jo dharma kā pacānā kithā vo dono dharma kā mishraṇa thā.* (The dharma that those Sufis assimilated was a mixture of both dharmas.)" Therefore, he explicitly placed each element within the ritualized activities at Hari Om Mandir within his understanding of Hindu boundaries.

"Sindhis are more Sikh than Sikhs themselves" (Gobind Wadhwani). "We believe in practically every god that usually every Hindu believes in" (B. K. Thadani). "We are actually Sufis" (A. C. Hemnani). "We follow Vedic *dharma*" (W. H. Gurnani). These representations from leaders at the Hari Om Mandir reflect issues similar to the internal debate over the best label for this institution. Is the Hari Om Mandir a *gurdwara?* A temple? A charitable institution? These differences arise not only because Sindhis hold diverse views but also because the dominant language available to them to represent themselves and their institution to non-Sindhis did not reflect their own understandings. The diverse ways that they presented their community to me also contrasts with the more homogeneous nature of the published representations. Although those representations also lacked adequate labels because of the complexity of the community, reducing Sindhi representations to short newspaper articles glossed over much of that complexity, emphasizing instead the Hindu ideals of service to all humanity.

Other Sindhi Institutions in Diaspora

Such internal debate and external tensions were not unique to the community in Lucknow, as other institutions that Sindhis developed after Partition faced similar issues. While commonalities are evident between these various institutions, they each had idiosyncrasies related to their specific location and the immediate concerns of the community itself. The arrangements of these institutions and their history further illustrate the nature of Sindhi Hindu experiences in diaspora.

In Chennai (formerly Madras), Sindhis established a variety of institutions. In Georgetown, an older section of the city comprised of narrow lanes and much subsequent congestion, the Sindhi Hindu Dharmshala left no question about its community affiliation in its name. Like the Hari

Om Mandir, this institution provided some social services, such as a free dispensary, alongside its devotional activities. In fact, the waiting area for the dispensary also served as the main entrance area off the street.

A narrow hallway extended from the waiting area along one side of the main hall, with a secondary shrine and the stairs to the *dharmshala* (guest house) off the other side of the narrow hallway. Dedicated to Shiva, the secondary shrine had a lingam as its focal point, with smaller *murtis* depicting Ganesh, Shiva and Parvati, and Murugran. In contrast to the connection of Jhule Lal with Vishnu and Nanak in Lucknow, an image of Jhule Lal was next to this Shiva shrine. In the center of the main hall, a canopy enshrined a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib that was read every morning and evening, and an image of Nanak rested against the front of the canopy. Around the main hall was a shrine that contained *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan and other framed images, including Ram's Darbar, Ganesh, Gobind Singh, Venkateswara, and Harnam Das. What distinguished this collection of images from that of the Hari Om Mandir was the inclusion of Murugan and Venkateswara, who are both especially important in South India, and the exclusion of a separate Hanuman, who is more important in Lucknow.

When I visited this institution, several women were preparing for a *satsang,* focusing on a table that held flowers, a small image of Radha-Krishna, and several photos of people in front of the Lakshmi-Narayan shrine. These devotees, whom the caretaker identified as Rajasthani, not Sindhi, gave no consideration for the Guru Granth Sahib but focused their devotional songs on the table and shrine. Because few Sindhis still lived in that area, Sindhis seldom came to the Dharmshala. Based on the inscriptions in the main hall, however, most if not all of the images in the Dharmshala had been donated by Sindhis decades earlier when the institution was important in the Sindhi Hindu community of Chennai.

The changing fortunes of this institution reflect several important points. The reestablishment of economic resources in the Sindhi community had enabled many Sindhis to move from areas where they first settled after Partition to more affluent neighborhoods, often away from the more congested, older sections of cities. The challenge of urbanization and its related congestion often made visiting an institution that is now across town difficult, especially if the institution was in the heavily congested old city. Their increasing economic resources also enabled the construction of new institutions closer to these wealthier neighborhoods.

One of these newer institutions in Chennai was the Sindhu Sadan, which had become a focal institution for many Sindhis living in Chennai. Being in a somewhat less congested area of town, the Sindhu Sadan was easier to access, even for those who did not live in the neighborhood. This

institution was also more comfortable, with larger spaces and powerful air conditioning. In 2005, the community had sufficient resources to expand the main hall on the third floor, temporarily moving most of their activities to the ground floor. This temporary area contained two shrines, one with images of Ram's Darbar and the other with Radha-Krishna. The left third of the stage held a canopy with the Guru Granth Sahib enshrined along with a painting of Nanak. The remainder of the stage provided space for musicians and speakers to address the devotees in the hall, which could handle several hundred people.

Although the Sunday morning *satsang* at the Sindhu Sadan had similarities to activities at the Hari Om Mandir, the relation to the Guru Granth Sahib was significantly different. While most of the devotees covered their heads, a few did not follow this sign of respect before the Guru Granth Sahib. During a *satsang,* an older woman, whom members of the community simply identified as a saint, played the harmonium, sang, and admonished the devotees present. Her style was interactive, posing questions to the audience, verifying that they understood her teachings. What was more significant about her presentation, however, was that she, as the living saint, attracted the primary attention from devotees. In fact, in the middle of her discourse, a man approached the Guru Granth Sahib to pay obeisance, and the saint stopped speaking and glared at him. She only continued after other devotees instructed the man to sit down. In this way, the Guru Granth Sahib did not maintain its primacy in the Sadan like it did in the Hari Om Mandir. After her presentation, the community conducted *arti* before the sets of *murtis* and the Guru Granth Sahib, and then they recited Ardas and read from the Guru Granth Sahib.

While the *satsang* occurred on the ground floor, a priest maintained a secondary prayer hall on the first floor. This hall contained a Guru Granth Sahib and various images, including Jhule Lal. When I entered the hall, the priest, who was attending to the image of Jhule Lal, approached and offered *prasad* from Jhule Lal as well as *kara prasad* from the Guru Granth Sahib. The dual *prasads* reinforced the sense that the Guru Granth Sahib was less central for this community than for many of the Sindhis of the Hari Om Mandir.

Sindhu House in Singapore, which was the headquarters of the Sindhi Merchants Association of Singapore, included the Parsram Dadalani Prayer Hall on its upper floor. Although the name for the ritualized space avoided the debates over the appropriate label for the Hari Om Mandir, the formation of ritualized activities resembled the Hari Om Mandir much more than either institution in Chennai did. A line of shrines with *murtis* of Jhule Lal, Shiva and his family, Radha-Krishna, Ram Darbar, and Lakshmi-Narayan faced the main entrance. While this resembled each of the other institutions, the presence of an urn with burning joss sticks

on the shelf in front of the shrines, as in Chinese temples in Singapore, reflected the particularities of this diasporic context. To the right of the shrines, along the same wall, was a canopy containing the Guru Granth Sahib, with framed pictures of Nanak and Jhule Lal in front and one picture of Nanak behind it. Along the top of the canopy were an Om and a small image of Ganesh as a reminder of the Hindu understanding of this community.

On the occasion of Ramnaumi in 2002, the community added a cradle containing a drawing of Ram to the right of the canopy. Despite this emphasis during a Hindu festival, the central aspect of the ritualized activities remained the Guru Granth Sahib. Unlike at the Sindhu Sadan, all of the devotees covered their head in the prayer hall. After a variety of *bhajans* in Sindhi and Hindi and a discourse in Hindi by the priest, devotees lined up to give a cloth to the Guru Granth Sahib. Participants then took turns presenting trays with burning lamps to each of the five *murti* shrines, the canopy, and the cradle for Ram. The community then recited Ardas and a young woman read from the Guru Granth Sahib. Following this, the community received the *kara prasad* from the Guru Granth Sahib and went downstairs for a *langar*. With the effort to keep everyone's head covered, the donation of cloths for the Guru Granth Sahib, and the focus on the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, these ritualized activities maintained the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib, as typically done at the Hari Om Mandir, even during a Hindu festival.

The emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib at Sindhi-founded institutions has also created tensions in contexts where the Sindhi institution became a pan-Indian temple. In Manila, the Philippines, the Sindhis constructed an institution with the Guru Granth Sahib and various Hindu deities. They first hired a *granthi* to care for the Guru Granth Sahib then a Brahmin to serve the *murtis*. As non-Sindhi Hindus began to visit the temple, they occasionally offended the *granthi* by keeping their heads uncovered, being unaccustomed to the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Over time, the Brahmin and the devotions directed toward the *murtis* became dominant in the institution, even though the Sindhi community continued to conduct the rituals in relation to the Guru Granth Sahib (Thapan 2002, 162–168).

In many places, especially outside of India, Sindhi Hindus do not always create their own institutions, making them dependent on other communities. Relations between Sindhis and non-Sindhis at non-Sindhi institutions have often been relatively positive. However, serious disruptions can destroy those relationships, thus accentuating the tenuous position of Sindhis as dependent on the acceptance of the larger communities. A few Sindhis have been involved actively in the founding and leadership of a predominantly Punjabi *gurdwara* in Atlanta, Georgia. Sindhis

have also sponsored the *langar* at the *gurdwara* to celebrate family and community achievements. Nevertheless, cultural events and language opportunities there focused on the dominant Punjabi heritage, despite the Sindhi contributions. A similar arrangement at a *gurdwara* in Hong Kong became problematic when younger Khalsa Sikhs refused to recognize the non-Khalsa Sindhis as legitimate participants. After Sindhis were excluded from the managing committee, many stopped participating at that institution (Thapan 2002, 178).

Sindhis have also developed cooperative relationships in pan-Indian Hindu temples. In Charlotte, North Carolina, for example, Sindhis have been significant leaders in the founding of the Hindu Center and organize large commemorations for Cheti Chand there. Sindhis also installed a *murti* of Jhule Lal among the other deities in the Durga Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, outside of DC. While these two examples are both positive, the Guru Granth Sahib is not included in these arrangements. In many pan-Indian temples, however, Sindhi Hindus either remained in the background as they accepted the placement of images from other communities or were more directly excluded.

Multiple Debates

Sindhis have made adjustments because of the changing dynamics of their diasporic lives, from the changing neighborhood demographics and potential legal impositions to the centrality of different deities and ritual implements. Despite the variety of forms within Sindhi Hindu rituals, the commonalities between these Sindhi institutions highlight a broad sense of Sindhi Hindu traditions. Each institution combined veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib with devotion to a variety of deities commonly recognized as Hindu, although the relationships between these elements varied. Combining these elements, however, often subjected Sindhi communities to external pressures to conform to the dominant definitions. Whether in the name change of the Harmandir, the reduced emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib at the Sindhi Hindu Dharmshala, or the tensions in the Sindhi temple in Manila, each community responded to the external tensions surrounding their practices and the changing circumstances in their local context.

The different names of these institutions, Harmandir / Hari Om Mandir, Sindhi Hindu Dharmshala, Sindhu Sadan, and Parsram Dadalani Prayer Hall, contain Sikh, Hindu, and non-sectarian references, which further illustrates the debates that surrounded the labeling of the institutions that defied the dominant definitions of religious boundaries. Reflecting

the larger problem of language for a minority diasporic community, the labels that Sindhis used generally immersed them in the hegemonic understandings of religious borders that contributed to the external pressure they experienced. In their representations of themselves as individuals or a community, the experience of immersion caused many Sindhis to shift between their own definitions and the dominant understandings as they conversed with non-Sindhis. The disconnect between A. C. Hemnani's assertion of an alternative understanding of Sufism and his shift to a Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim trichotomy when discussing my research, for example, revealed the multiple discourses in which he participated and contradicted his assertions that all of these elements were fully Hindu.

Such contradictory assertions in individual representations is not unusual, as most people shift their assertions based on the different types of discourses that surround them. Antonio Gramsci highlights, for example, how people frequently switch from one system of thought to another, just as A. C. Hemnani switched between Sindhi understandings and the dominant definitions (Gramsci 1971, 324–326). While at times this shifting can create "ruptures," or inconsistencies that are obvious to themselves, this shifting use of systems at other times reflects human agency, as people can manipulate or take on multiple discursive subject positions, depending on how they want to present themselves (Ewing 1997, 15–29).

The challenge of Sindhi self-representations in diaspora also relate to the linguistic context and the status of Sindhi language. Older members of the Sindhi community in Lucknow may have particular Sindhi terms that they use to represent their institutions, but my interviewees, preferring discussions in English and Hindi, never used them with me. For example, Sindhis in other communities have referred to religious institutions that house a Guru Granth Sahib and Hindu deities as *tikanas*, but the Sindhis in Lucknow never used that term, even when they searched for a better term for the Hari Om Mandir. It was not clear to me if the absence of that term arose because they were not familiar with it or they refrained from using Sindhi words with non-Sindhis, or some combination of the two. What was clear was that the term *tikana* was not prominent among their representations to non-Sindhis in Lucknow.

The variety of names and ritualized activities also reflect larger internal debates within Sindhi communities. As each community developed, they debated how to balance the formation of their heritage in new contexts with their assimilation to those differing situations, as seen in the increasing Hindi and the addition of the Hanuman shrine at the Hari Om Mandir. On a deeper level, these internal debates also revolved around the issue of what Sindhi traditions actually entail. The different regions of Sindh had different emphases, and individual variations clearly existed on the local

and familial levels. The adjustments that these communities made did not always correspond to their ideological positions and sometimes encouraged shifts in those ideological positions. In this way, these internal debates about the formation of their traditions illustrate how practices and self-representations, while related, do not develop in complete congruence.

These internal debates also highlight the complex and fluid nature of structures of identification, a corollary to the recognition of religious boundaries as historically constructed. Recognizing identification as a process rather than a fixed label highlights the agency of any group or individual to present their identification in particular ways, which shift according to situations, to gain specific ends (Calhoun 1994; Hall 1996). The recognition of people's agency to manipulate their identifications further demonstrates the limited power of the dominant definitions of religions. However, people must also represent themselves in ways recognizable to the broader society for that society to seriously consider these representations. As the ideologies and cultural sensibilities in the dominant culture affect the expectations of members of that culture, these expectations influence the ways diasporic communities such as Sindhi Hindus present themselves, both to others and to themselves (Williams 1988, 11–14). Conceiving identification as complex processes also acknowledges the multiple layers of identification (e.g., occupation, language or regional group, nationality, religion, political allegiance, etc.) and counters the tendency in Religious Studies to assume the primacy of religious identifications, which then overwrites the complexity of life choices.[7]

These various responses to the internal and external debates surrounding their institutions and community identifications reveal only a portion of the variety of Sindhi responses to challenging environments. Even in the specific context of Lucknow, other groups constructed their traditions and responded to the various challenges of diaspora in ways that differed from the responses at the Hari Om Mandir. Each community of Sindhis has the agency to respond according to their own interpretation of the larger environment as well as the authority structures within their own community. While the institutions described here were generally voluntary associations that had a diffuse authority structure that, ideally, negotiated the different needs and concerns of community members, the guru movements among Sindhis concentrated authority in the guru, which fostered a variety of other approaches to these various pressures.

Chapter 3

Defining Movements

As I arrived on the climactic evening of the three-day *mela* (festival) at the Shiv Shanti Ashram in Lucknow, hundreds of people in the front half of the open-air pavilion sat in quiet meditation, ignoring the hushed bustle behind them as people socialized, slept, and perused the booths selling devotional items at the back of the pavilion. Chants of "*sacco sacco rām ho* (Ram is truth)!" broke the silence in the front of the pavilion. Those who were meditating began to participate in the chanting, which grew in volume as those at the back added their voices.

As the chanting intensified, Sadh Ram, a guru from Pakistan who was sitting on the right side of the stage, stood up and led a group of devotees to a carved wooden canopy on the opposite side of the stage. The canopy housed the Guru Granth Sahib covered in a gold brocaded cloth. The light of a small lantern hanging above the book sparkled off the red and green tinsel decorating the canopy. The man sitting behind the Guru Granth Sahib took a cloth from Sadh Ram, unfolded it, and laid it over the book. As the devotees continued chanting, others on the stage passed another cloth, and another, and another, some with exquisite gold brocade, others of dark green silk, to be given to the Guru Granth Sahib.

Those on the stage then began leading the crowd in singing "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare,*" while devotees in the audience lined up at the front of the pavilion to present their cloths. The occasion for these gifts honoring the Guru Granth Sahib was the conclusion of an *akhand path* of the Guru Granth Sahib as a part of the *varshi* (death anniversary) of Asuda Ram, a Sindhi guru whose son and successor, Chandu Ram, had established this ashram in Lucknow when he moved from Pakistan in the late 1970s.

After the donation of cloths, the program continued with devotional songs. A little while later, a line of women formed along the left side of the pavilion, mirrored by a line of men on the right side. At the appointed time, these lines began inching toward the stage where each person had brief audiences with several figures, including Chandu Ram and Sadh Ram. As the lines moved forward, other followers queued up to have their moment with these spiritual teachers. As the length of the lines resembled the line of devotees offering cloths to the Guru Granth Sahib, the opportunity for a personal audience with these gurus rivaled the significance of the Guru Granth Sahib and became a second climax to the *mela*.

Guru Movements and Their Foci

The adoration of living gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib made visible the two focal points at the Shiv Shanti Ashram and represented another way in which Sindhi Hindus brought together elements commonly recognized as separate religions. Although their ritualized treatment of the Guru Granth Sahib largely reflected Khalsa Sikh traditions, the veneration of living gurus reflected respect for gurus outside of Nanak's lineage and rejected Khalsa Sikh assertions that the Guru Granth Sahib is the sole living guru. Further complicating the identification of the *mela* and this community, devotees alternately identified the gurus as Sufis and Hindus.

In this way, the Shiv Shanti Ashram maintained two centers of sacrality, in contrast to the more singular centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Hari Om Mandir. The physical layout, images, and practices at the Shiv Shanti Ashram demonstrated their inclusion of elements typically associated with Sikhism and Hinduism. Specifically Sufi elements were not distinguishable in the grounds and activities of the ashram, but participants and the literature of the movement sometimes identified the ashram's emphasis on loving the divine, which drew on both Sufi and *bhakti* roots, as Sufism. Through these various components, the ashram created its own combination of Sindhi elements that differed from both the constructions at the Hari Om Mandir and the dominant understandings of Hindu, Sufi, and Sikh traditions in Lucknow.

Other Sindhi guru movements, however, did not replicate the dual foci in Chandu Ram's movement.[1] As the presence of images of Rochal Das and T. L. Vaswani in the Hari Om Mandir demonstrates, these two spiritual teachers were also important in the Sindhi Hindu community in Lucknow, even as each of these movements developed different emphases and responses to their diasporic contexts. Through the comparison of the

development and contemporary forms of the movements associated with Chandu Ram, Rochal Das, and T. L. Vaswani, the vitality and diversity of Sindhi Hindu responses to the challenges of diaspora become apparent. Therefore, while Sindhi traditions challenge narrow understandings of religions that do not recognize the contestation that surrounds the definition of any religion, Sindhi Hindus did not comprise a monolithic tradition, as they maintained a range of understandings and practices beyond the variety within the institutions surveyed in the previous chapter.

The construction and performance of their Sindhi heritage was a continuing process in each movement, like any performance of ritualized activities (Schechner 1985, 35–55). Because of their organizational forms, guru movements differ from other organizations that diasporic communities create in terms of this process of continually recreating practices. While organizations such as the Hari Om Mandir in Lucknow must respond to various interests among leaders and devotees, within guru movements the guru provides authoritative direction for the development of the movement. The guru's heritage, spiritual insights, and vision of how to reach followers, which are not static in themselves, combine to influence the forms that their practices take at any given moment. As each guru has a distinct heritage, insight, and vision, their movements develop in unique ways.

The changes over time in each movement, moreover, do not exhaust the variety within the movement. The followers of each guru, despite their frequently deep commitment to the movement, have the agency to create their own emphases. As they balance their particular background and individual experiences as part of a diasporic minority with their commitment and respect to their guru, these emphases typically differ from the specific traditions in the official movement. The forms of each movement do not determine the practices of its followers.

In addition to providing historical context and an understanding of the diversity among the movements, the written and oral representations of each movement reflect more of the challenges that Sindhis face in relation to the external pressures and the limitations of language. Those representing each movement struggled with another challenge related to language, beyond the difficulty with general labels in the institutions. Some of the vocabulary that each movement used to explain their traditions, especially terms derived from Sufi traditions, held different connotations to Sindhis than to many non-Sindhis, thus complicating communication with non-Sindhis. Some of the representations in these movements reflected significant discontinuities between their idealized images of pre-Partition Sindh and the animosity that some Sindhis felt toward Muslims after the trauma of Partition and related strife. These challenges illustrate further the complex negotiations that Sindhi Hindus faced as they established

traditions outside of Sindh and the extensive variety of responses that they developed.

The Guru Granth Sahib Is Hindu: Chandu Ram and His Followers

Chandu Ram was born in the village of Panno Akil, Sindh, in 1947 as the son of Asuda Ram, a Sindhi Hindu guru. While many Hindus left Sindh in the years following Partition, Chandu Ram remained there with his father and some of his father's devotees. After his father's death in 1960, Chandu Ram stayed in Panno Akil, continuing to serve his father's *samadhi* (shrine commemorating cremation or burial) while also traveling, like his father had, to visit his followers who had immigrated to India. In 1977, almost two decades after his father's death, Chandu Ram migrated to India and selected Lucknow as the site for his new home, the Shiv Shanti Ashram. In Lucknow, Chandu Ram began the process of creating Sindhi traditions in a different environment, much as many Sindhis had been doing since Partition.

Chandu Ram and his followers conducted a vibrant array of activities housed in the ashram's complex of buildings. Followers came from other parts of India and from Sindh to serve in the ashram and sit at the feet of their guru. Besides *satsangs* every morning and evening and an array of annual festivals, including Ramnaumi, Nanak Jayanti, and the *varshi* for Asuda Ram, the community in 2002 provided housing for destitute women, sponsored a free homeopathic clinic each week and a free eye clinic each year, established a cow shelter, and provided marriage arrangements for poor families, among other social services. As in the representations of the Hari Om Mandir, several leaders in the movement emphasized these social services in their discussions with me and frequently connected these activities to the example of Asuda Ram and his gurus, Kanwar Ram and Satram Das.

The dual foci of the ashram, honoring both the Guru Granth Sahib and the lineage of gurus in which Chandu Ram was the living master, clearly influenced both the design of the ashram's *satsang* hall (figure 3.1) and the ritualized activities that the community conducted. The end of the main hall was divided into two shrines (A and B in figure 3.1). In the center of the larger shrine was a canopy divided into three sections (E in figure 3.1), each containing a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, one in Gurmukhi, one in Hindi, and one in Sindhi. Framed pictures of Radha-Krishna, Nanak, and Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman rested against the base (F in figure 3.1) of

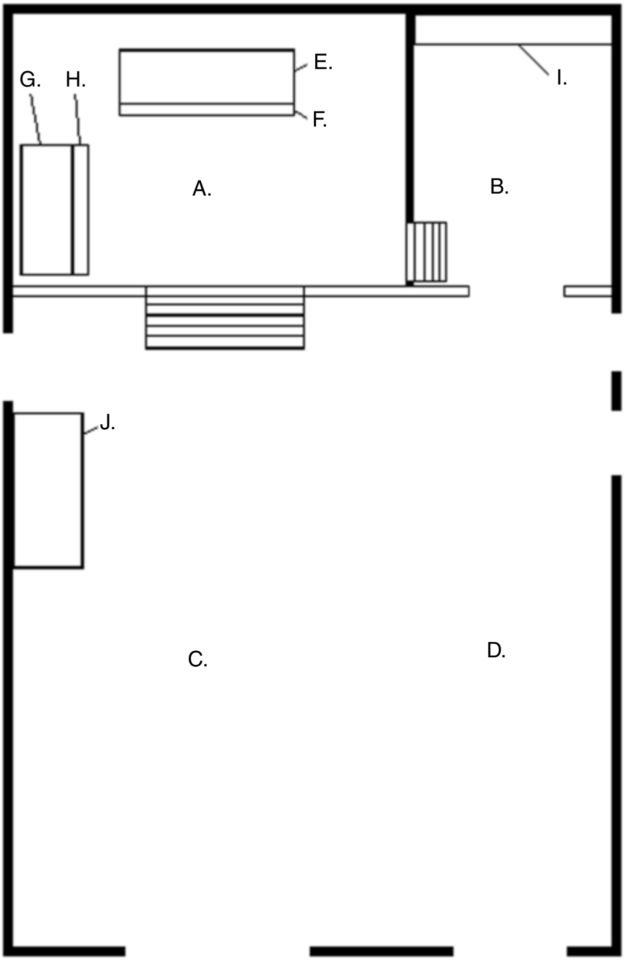


Figure 3.1 Diagram of the floor plan of the satsang hall, Shiv Shanti Ashram

A. Darbar Sahib
B. Kutiya Sahib
C. Men's side of satsang hall
D. Women's side of satsang hall
E. Central canopy for Guru Granth Sahib
F. Pictures of Radha-Krishna, Nanak, and Ram Darbar
G. Canopy with three sant granths
H. Pictures of Chela Ram, T. L. Vaswani, and Teoonram
I. Pictures of Kanwar Ram, Asuda Ram, and Satram Das
J. Chandu Ram's divan

this canopy. A second canopy (G in figure 3.1), along the sidewall of this shrine, housed books that other Sindhi gurus had composed, including the Nuri Granth of T. L. Vaswani. Similarly, garlanded pictures of the three gurus whose texts were in the second canopy rested against its base (H in figure 3.1). The second, smaller shrine honored Chandu Ram's lineage, with a painting of Asuda Ram in the center and paintings of Asuda Ram's two gurus on either side (I in figure 3.1).

As in the *vārshi*, during the *satsangs* themselves, the focus of devotional activities alternated between Chandu Ram and the Guru Granth Sahib. Chandu Ram sat on a *divan* (J in figure 3.1) on the main floor of the *satsang* hall, with devotees continually approaching him to touch his feet, offer him sweets, and receive his advice and blessings. Whenever devotees arrived, they typically bowed before Chandu Ram and then entered the larger shrine to pay obeisance to the Guru Granth Sahib, though some only venerated one or the other of these two foci. Several devotees also venerated the smaller shrine as a second representation of Chandu Ram's lineage, but devotees seldom interacted with the texts of the gurus in the side canopy of the larger shrine.

The attention of devotees during the rituals also shifted between Chandu Ram and the Guru Granth Sahib. At the start of an evening *satsang* in February 2002, for example, devotees faced Chandu Ram as he led the recitations of Rehrasi and Ardas, which most people present knew from memory. The ashram's version of Ardas listed the ten Sikh gurus and various elements of Sikh traditions but, as at the Hari Om Mandir, eliminated references to the Khalsa that are typical in Ardas at Khalsa Sikh *gurdwaras.* With devotees still turned toward Chandu Ram, musicians started singing "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare.*" Though ritualized activities at most Hindu temples dictate that devotees stand and wave lamps before *murtis* during this song, no one stood or waved a lamp. Several musicians then led the community in singing a composition of Sami, a Sindhi Hindu poet, several *bhajans* devoted to Hindu deities, and a Sikh devotional song repeating the refrain, "*Vāhiguru, Vāhiguru, Vāhiguru.*" The fervor of the singing increased with each subsequent song.

After the devotional songs, everyone, including Chandu Ram, faced the Guru Granth Sahib for *arti*, which involved singing another devotional song, not "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare,*" and honoring the texts and images in the shrine by waving an oil lamp. One leader of the ashram then sat behind the Gurmukhi Guru Granth Sahib and read a portion, while other men closed and properly wrapped the other Guru Granth Sahibs and two of the texts in the side canopy. During the reading, Chandu Ram repeatedly corrected the pronunciation and commented on the verses. Another leader then read from the Nuri Granth, with similar commentary from Chandu

Ram. When the readings from the two texts were complete and all of the texts were closed and wrapped, everyone stood, and the main reader faced the central canopy and recited the concluding Ardas. Afterward, most devotees turned their attention back to Chandu Ram, who lingered for a moment to bless devotees and receive their devotions.

Beyond devotees shifting their attention between Chandu Ram and the Guru Granth Sahib, the way that the readings were conducted reinforced the dual foci of the ashram. As Chandu Ram turned toward the Guru Granth Sahib, like everyone else present, he demonstrated his reverence for the text. Chandu Ram's interruptions to correct the readers further revealed this respect, as he knew them well and wanted to insure their proper recitation. Such a deep commitment to the Guru Granth Sahib was nothing new to Chandu Ram and his lineage. Both Asuda Ram and his guru, Kanwar Ram, recited passages from the Guru Granth Sahib and other Sikh compositions (Punshi 1985, 33; Pursvani n.d., 71–76). Similarly, Chandu Ram's spiritual education included the study of the Guru Granth Sahib along with the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Ramcharitmanas (Pursvani n.d., 170–171). However, the interruptions of the recitations, especially Chandu Ram's insertion of his own commentary, also demonstrated his priority over the texts. Although he turned to face the Guru Granth Sahib at this stage of the *satsang,* he maintained the final authority over the progress of the *satsang* and could interrupt or preempt any activity.

Before my fieldwork, the relationship between the Guru Granth Sahib and the other elements in the movement had shifted significantly. At the ashram in Lucknow, the three copies of the Guru Granth Sahib were not originally together in the central canopy. The Bhagavad Gita and Ramcharitmanas had been enshrined in the main canopy on the right and left of the Gurmukhi Guru Granth Sahib. In early 2001, Chandu Ram decided to replace the Bhagavad Gita and Ramcharitmanas with translations of the Guru Granth Sahib in Hindi and Sindhi. The Bhagavad Gita and Ramcharitmanas were placed in a cabinet, where they could be used when desired, but they no longer received the honored treatment that the community accorded to the texts in the canopies each day. Explaining the changes, one volunteer leader in the ashram solely attributed them to Chandu Ram's directive. He then justified the changes by asserting, "Our base is the Guru Granth Sahib." Whatever the explanation, the change removed any doubt that the Guru Granth Sahib was the sole text that provided the other focal point at the ashram, along with the lineage of gurus that Chandu Ram embodied.

The changing of the enshrined texts reveals several aspects of the formation of traditions at the ashram beyond Chandu Ram's position of authority.

First, the selection of Hindi and Sindhi translations was significant. Chandu Ram clearly wanted to maintain the connection to their Sindhi heritage through language but also recognized the dynamics of living in a Hindi-speaking region, where fluency in Hindi was vital. Second, the switching of the texts challenged some common assumptions about Sindhis in diaspora. Although the political tensions of the 1980s pushed some Sindhi Hindus away from *gurdwaras,* the example of the texts in the ashram demonstrates that the experience of diaspora did not result in the wholesale homogenization of Sindhi Hindus into mainstream Hinduism, as some scholars and many Sindhis have feared (Markovits 2000, 285; Williams 1988, 241). Third, this selection also clearly maintained a distinction between the ashram's formation and the understandings of Khalsa Sikhs, in that most Khalsa Sikhs did not recognize translations of the Guru Granth Sahib as being sacred texts alongside the traditional Gurmukhi version.

The treatment of the texts from Sindhi gurus, including the Nuri Granth, demonstrated another unique component of Sindhi traditions at the ashram. Placing each text in a canopy, with the proper ritualized actions that included the formal opening and closing of the texts every day, raised the status of these texts (and previously the Bhagavad Gita and Ramcharitmanas) to a level similar to the Guru Granth Sahib. These actions further diverged from the sole emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib in Khalsa Sikh practices. Nevertheless, some distinctions remained between the Guru Granth Sahib and the other granths. Most of those who approached the main shrine gave greater reverence to the Guru Granth Sahib. I never observed an individual sit behind a text in the side canopy to read it silently, like some devotees did with the Guru Granth Sahib. Similarly, at the end of the *satsang,* the man who led the final Ardas faced the Guru Granth Sahibs and bowed before them, with no consideration given to the texts in the side canopy. In a manner similar to the Hari Om Mandir, the community maintained a hierarchy between the Guru Granth Sahib and the other texts despite raising those other texts to a status close to that of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The increasing emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib did not mean that other aspects of Sindhi traditions were neglected within Chandu Ram's movement. An Om in raised brass adorned the top of each section of the central canopy, emphasizing the Hindu identification directly above each copy of the Guru Granth Sahib. Each section of the canopy also revealed the previous arrangement of texts, with raised brass letters under each Om praising Krishna, Nanak, and Ram and the garlanded paintings of each figure resting against the base of the respective sections of the canopy. Other images of deities, including Shiva, Jhule Lal, and Durga, were displayed both in the shrines and on the exterior of the main building.

The festivals celebrated in the ashram further demonstrated the continued importance of deities and rituals associated with Hinduism, despite the increasing importance of the Guru Granth Sahib. In addition to the *varshi* for Asuda Ram, the community held significant events for Nanak Jayanti, Ramnaumi, and Cheti Chand. While Nanak Jayanti commemorates the first guru in the Sikh lineage, the celebrations at the ashram, as at the Hari Om Mandir, incorporated Hindu devotional songs alongside the emphasis on Nanak and an *akhand path*. In 2002, the ashram's activities on Cheti Chand included a street procession and *mela* honoring Jhule Lal as well as a mass *upanayan* (ceremony investing boys with the sacred thread), organizing the investiture of the sacred thread for boys whose families could not afford to conduct the ritual themselves.

Chandu Ram's recreation of Sindhi traditions in Lucknow also maintained a different connection to the land of Sindh than most diasporic Sindhis, including Rochal Das and J. P. Vaswani. Although most Sindhi Hindus emphasized the difficulties with visiting Sindh, and few had actually made the trek, Chandu Ram and his followers maintained consistent connections across that international border. Because of his three decades in Sindh following Partition, Chandu Ram maintained a larger following there than many Sindhi gurus in diaspora. Except when conflicts between India and Pakistan closed the border, these followers often visited the ashram in Lucknow, and Chandu Ram regularly made trips to Sindh, as well as to other centers around India.

These connections made Chandu Ram's movement uniquely transnational. Unlike stereo-typical transnational religions that conjure images of wealthy devotees flying around the world to connect with their guru, Chandu Ram's devotees in Sindh were not particularly affluent, and the ashram provided housing for visitors and assisted them with the necessary documents for Pakistani citizens to visit India. This transnational component, rather than connecting Chandu Ram to Europe and America, kept Chandu Ram grounded in the land of Sindh and the shrine of his father. While most diasporic groups rely on memories and nostalgic recreations of their ancestral land, the physical contact that Chandu Ram maintained gave those memories a more tangible character, although the contacts existed with a region that itself had not remained static like diasporic memories tend to do. He also continued to emphasize Sindhi language to a degree that other gurus did not, a decision compounded by this continued connection to the people in Sindh.

Hagiography of Chandu Ram's Lineage

The hagiographies of Chandu Ram's lineage reflect the complexity of Sindhi traditions that the dual foci of the ashram represented. Leaders at

the ashram gave me two books about the lineage, an English biography of Kanwar Ram and a Hindi biography of Asuda Ram. While these two volumes addressed many of the complex issues that Sindhis faced, their responses to those issues were quite different.

Dr. S. K. Punshi, a Sindhi dermatologist in Maharashtra, self-published the biography of Kanwar Ram in 1985. Like many other Sindhi Hindus, Punshi in his account of Kanwar Ram's life represents Sindh in general as a land of communal harmony. However, the biography also reveals a tension between that harmony and communalism, both in Sindhi history and in Punshi's self-understanding. While Punshi praises Kanwar Ram for his respect for all Sindhi religious communities, he implies the superiority of the Hindu community and reveals some bitterness against Muslims.

According to Punshi, Kanwar Ram, like most saints, was beyond the communal divisions that have troubled South Asian society. After declaring Kanwar Ram a "true saint in the real sense of the word," Punshi asserts, "Saints proper do not belong to any religion. They belong to humanity and the welfare of humanity has been their goal" (1985, 17–19). Throughout the biography, Punshi reiterates that Kanwar Ram had Muslim as well as Hindu followers, even noting that Kanwar Ram's followers asked him why he served Muslims more than "the people of your own caste and others" (77). Such a declaration suggests a sense of competition between Kanwar Ram's followers and "Muslims," although the reference to caste, rather than a parallel religious identification, makes it less clear whether that competition reflected ethnic and social distinctions or differences in belief and practice.

Punshi also discusses the breadth of Kanwar Ram's activities. For example, he writes, "He would sing song of Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Gurunanak, Kabir, Farid, Ravidas, Shah Sachal, Sami, Rohal and others even he would sing the songs in praise of Martyrdom of Hasan and Hussain" (65). Punshi earlier had identified Shah and Sachal as Sufis and Sami as a Hindu, thus confirming the multireligious nature of Kanwar Ram's repertoire (7–8). In a chapter titled "Communal Harmony," Punshi further emphasizes the extent of Kanwar Ram's acceptance of Muslims by asserting, "Such was the greatness of Kanwar he even went to the Mazar [Sufi shrine] and tombs of Muslim Pirs and Fakirs with due respect so Kanwar was also great sufi Saint."[2]

Nevertheless, Punshi demonstrates the clear Hindu identification of Kanwar Ram as well as the complexity of his religious identification. He highlights, for example, Kanwar Ram's investiture with a sacred thread and specifically emphasizes how that ritual "is a must for a hindu" (31). After his death, according to Punshi, Kanwar Ram was cremated "with Vedic mantras," and his ashes were "submitted to the bed of Mother Ganga—the

holy river of Hindus." However, this clear Hindu identification was not so simple, as Kanwar Ram's ashes were first bathed in both the Indus River and the tank at the Harmandir in Amritsar, Punjab, a central site for Sikhs, before being placed in the Ganges (87–88).

In contrast to the trope of harmony and complex identifications, Punshi emphasizes a communal identification as he clearly favors Hindu traditions over Islam. Beyond quoting portions of the Vedas that praise the Sindhu River, Punshi implicitly contrasts Islam and Hinduism in the first chapter through his use of descriptive adjectives. He refers to the "*darkest* day in the History of Sindh" when Mohammad bin Qasim defeated the "*great* Hindu warrior," thus spreading Islam in "the nook and corner of the *pious* and *holy* land of the Vedas."[3]

This tension between praising communal harmony and emphasizing Hindu superiority is even clearer in Punshi's account of Kanwar Ram's death. In 1939, the followers of a Muslim *pir* murdered Kanwar Ram after the *pir's* son had been attacked. While this event contests the emphasis on the amity between Hindus and Muslims in Sindh that Punshi and other Sindhis asserted, Punshi's description of these events, along with his use of adjectives above, reveals an underlying enmity. He declares that the *pir* was "fanatic and bigoted" and "openly incited the Muslims against the Hindus," though Punshi never addresses the identification of those who attacked the *pir's* son, whom the *pir* understood to be Hindu (77–78). Discussing the murder, Punshi uses motifs of Karbala and the justice of Muhammad to demonstrate that Kanwar Ram was unjustly attacked. By associating Kanwar Ram with central figures in Islam, he implies that the *pir* and his followers failed to follow Islam fully (78).

The quotes Punshi includes in the text also diverge from the trope of harmony. Despite Kanwar Ram's appreciation of the Guru Grant Sahib, sixteen of the approximately fifty quotations in the book come from the Bhagavad Gita. The remaining sources include the Vedas, European and American authors, Indian religious leaders, and the Gospel of Matthew. The absence of quotes from Sikh gurus and Sufi Muslims ironically disregards Kanwar Ram's anticommunal sensibilities that Punshi otherwise praises. Punshi's biography of Kanwar Ram therefore reinforces some of the tensions within the Sindhi Hindu community between communal harmony and the superiority of Hindus, particularly in relation to Muslims, that their losses during Partition and the communal context of North India exacerbated.

Wanting to emphasize the most direct predecessor of Chandu Ram, the Shiv Shanti Ashram published a Hindi biography of Asuda Ram written by Gul A. Pursvani. Although the volume provides no date of publication, based on some of the information it contains, it was clearly produced

between the late 1990s and 2001, when I received a copy of it. Addressing readers in the diasporic context of North India, Pursvani maintains the clear Hindu identification that Punshi assumes, but his work more consistently reflects the inclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib and occasionally Sufi saints at the ashram itself. Pursvani's insertion of poetic material into the book, for example, comes almost entirely from Indian, and often Sindhi, religious figures or texts. On the basis of Pursvani's direct attribution of approximately half of these quotes, the Guru Granth Sahib appears most often, with the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana slightly less frequently. Pursvani also incorporates verses from a range of poets who are commonly identified as Hindus, such as Meera, Tulsidas, and Sami, and as Muslim Sufis, including Shah Abdul Latif, Sachal, and Bulle Shah.

Throughout the biography, Pursvani assumes that his readers, as well as Asuda Ram and his lineage, identify as Hindus. Most directly, in a chapter tellingly titled "*gao sevā* (Cow Service)," Pursvani explicitly connects respect for cows to Hindu traditions and then admonishes his readers, "*āj ham gauon ke prati apane karttavya se vimukh ho cuke haĩ* (Today we fall short being indifferent toward our duties toward cows.)" (n.d., 56). His use of the plural first person explicitly unites Pursvani and his readers as Hindus.

Despite this Hindu identification, Arabic terms appear in the biography, reflecting the influence of West Asia on Sindhi traditions. In several lists of holy figures, Pursvani includes *fakir* (a mystic, usually a Sufi) and *dervish* (a mystic, usually a Sufi) as separate terms from *sant,* implying a distinction that might relate to an Islamic heritage (49, 177). However, since Pursvani does not use the terms consistently throughout the text, he may not intend to connote a communal identification. More significantly, when discussing love, Pursvani interchanges terms derived from Sanskrit with Arabic terms. When describing Asuda Ram's desire for Satram Das, for example, Pursvani uses "*prāṇanāth*" and "*mahbūb*" (love in Sanskrit and Arabic respectively) in one section (28–29). Pursvani also refers to Asuda Ram as an "*āśiq*" (lover in Arabic) because of his extreme devotion to Satram Das, Kanwar Ram, and the divine being (62). In another section, Pursvani includes a poem from Sachal Sarmast, a Sindhi Muslim, in which Sachal uses the Arabic derived term "*muhabbat*" (love, affection) to describe an unbreakable desire for the divine (58). In the next paragraph, Pursvani builds on the ideas of Sachal, using "*prem*" repeatedly for love (58). This exchange reflects the interchangeable nature of the Arabic and Sanskrit derived terms for Pursvani. The Sindhi acceptance of Muslim Sufis and their poetry immersed Sindhis in such Arabic-derived vocabulary.

Although Pursvani's acceptance of the multiple strands of Sindhi traditions reflects the communal harmony that Kanwar Ram and his successors

emphasized, Pursvani also demonstrates another challenge of language in diaspora. Using these terms in his Hindi text reflect the significance of Sufis and Arabic terms in Sindhi culture. However, when shifted into the Hindi context of North India, these terms carry strong associations with Islam for some non-Sindhis, not the more general, noncommunal understanding that many Sindhis intended.[4] Using such terms, therefore, reinforces the doubts among some non-Sindhis about the identification of Sindhis as Hindus. While both hagiographical sources emphasize Hindu-Muslim unity as an ideal element of Sindhi culture and emphasize relationships between this lineage and Muslim Sufis, they illustrate two challenges, the estrangement of Sindhi Hindus from Muslims following the events surrounding Partition and the different connotations of language, that Sindhis faced as they formed traditions outside of Sindh.

Contemporary Representations

Individual representations of Chandu Ram's movement and its formation of practices revealed challenges similar to the issues that the hagiographical accounts raise. Being immersed in a culture that held different understandings of the boundaries defining religions and different connotations for particular terms, Chandu Ram and his followers had to explain and defend their practices to non-Sindhis, at points revealing their own uncertainty about their traditions that did not match the expectations of the larger society.

The increased centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib forced Chandu Ram's followers to defend its significance in the movement. In one interview, N. Ahuja, a young Sindhi man who served Chandu Ram in the ashram, confidently switched roles to make a point about the Guru Granth Sahib. When he asked me, "What is the meaning of Sikh?" I referred to the *panj kakke*, (five outer symbols of the Khalsa Sikhs). He looked chagrinned and asserted that "sikh" meant disciple, that the first nine gurus were Hindus, and that the tenth guru was also a Hindu. He continued vigorously, "The tenth guru restarted the Khalsa Panth [Khalsa way or sect]; before that it was Hindu. Therefore, the Guru Granth Sahib, the Adi Granth is related to Hindus. If Sikhs say, 'This is ours,' they are wrong. If a Hindu says that it is not Hindu, they are wrong." Ahuja's confidence in defining the term "sikh" suggested that this argument was a common trope in his experiences, and his vehemence in asserting that Sikhs and Hindus who disagree are "wrong" implied that he, or the community as a whole, had faced opposition from both Sikhs and Hindus concerning the inclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib in their Hindu activities.

With the tension in the tradition surrounding connections to Islam and the term Sufi, which some of Chandu Ram's followers used to identify him, I began asking leaders in the movement about the meaning of that term. A volunteer leader at the ashram identified various Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim holy figures as saints whom they followed, but he deferred to his guru when I asked about the term Sufi. At my request, he asked Chandu Ram about the meaning of "Sufi saint" during one of Chandu Ram's brief daily audiences. (Chandu Ram had limited contact with people outside of the *satsangs* due to a vow of solitude.) Chandu Ram began his response with a reference to *sanatan dharma,* which, he explained, came from the Vedas and Shastras. He went on to explain that *sanatan dharma* focused on the *murtis* of deities and ranged from very deep spiritual concepts to very easy practices. These preliminary statements clearly emphasized Chandu Ram's association with traditions that many non-Sindhis recognized as Hindu.

However, as he continued, he revealed some of the tensions within Sindhi self-perceptions. Sufism, according to Chandu Ram, was separate from *sanatan dharma,* attaining a direct connection to God through the guidance of a guru. Chandu Ram then characterized Sufis as having "*allāh kā iśq* (love of god [Allah])." His use of Arabic terms for love and, more significantly, god implied that Sufism derived from Islamic origins, which corresponded to his assertion that Sufism differed from *sanatan dharma.* As he concluded, however, he added that he and his followers were also Sufis in some ways, though he clarified that they followed a *sanatan dharma* form of Sufism. His descriptions clearly diverged from the discourse of some colonial writers and some Sindhis that recognized Sufism as an Indian tradition separate from Islam. Instead, Chandu Ram implicitly connected Sufism with an Islamic heritage while also using the term as a sign of a person's deep religious commitment that extends beyond any specific religion. In practice, this conception meant that the activities at the ashram occasionally incorporated the teachings of a few Sindhi Muslims but more frequently honored non-Muslim Sufis who maintained "*allāh kā iśq* (love of Allah)."

My question about Sufism was more difficult for some of Chandu Ram's followers. When I asked Ahuja on a separate occasion what the term Sufi meant, he became flustered, "Sufi means those saints, or you can say Arabic saint. Muslims say that Sufi—I can't explain this word. Sufi means those who love god, their girlfriend or boyfriend is god." In his answer, he attempted to explain the term several times, stopping whenever he began to identify Sufis with Islam, as in his reference to Arabic and then to Muslims. His restatements revealed a certain discomfort with the terminology and suggested that he assumed a connection between Sufism and Islam within

his worldview. Yet, that assumption conflicted with his reluctance to associate his guru, who accepted the Sufi label, with Islam. Such discomfort demonstrated the implications of the prominent definitions in Lucknow and, perhaps, some animosity similar to Punshi's feelings. His final reference to love, as it coincided with some of Chandu Ram's teachings, suggested that he had heard Chandu Ram's definitions before I raised the issue, even though he had not fully internalized them.

Ahuja attempted another explanation of Sufism later that same evening, asserting, "In Sindh, Sufi saints, they were Sindhi by religion." He concluded his statements with the assertion that the saints were beyond definition. Highlighting their regional identification as opposed to any religious identification, Ahuja's statement resembles the common Sindhi explanation that Sindhi Sufis differed from Muslims from other places, so defining them as Muslim was incorrect. Nevertheless, Ahuja implied the connection to Islam in the same conversation as he used Arabic-derived terms, such as "*kalām* (speech, discourse)" and "*ghazal* (poem)," specifically for the teachings and poetry of Sindhi Sufis.

Therefore, the representations to me at the ashram, much like the hagiographical accounts, illustrate several difficulties that Chandu Ram's movement, and Sindhis more generally, faced in diaspora. While Chandu Ram established a center that honors his lineage, the Guru Granth Sahib, Sufis, and Hindu deities, with increasing emphasis on the guru lineage, which Chandu Ram himself continued, and the Guru Granth Sahib, the majority community among whom the Sindhis lived did not recognize all of these elements as Hindu. Chandu Ram and his followers, therefore, had to defend their identification of these practices. The influence of Sufis and their poetry on the language of the movement and Chandu Ram's continued identification as a Sufi, in a *sanatan* fashion, further complicated this defense of their practices to non-Sindhis and created internal tensions for some Sindhis because of their animosity toward Muslims and the continuing Hindu-Muslim tensions in India. These choices and challenges, though, represented only one aspect of Sindhi Hindu traditions, as other guru movements responded to these issues differently.

Hindu Sufis: Sufi Sant Dr. Rochal Das and His Successors

Although Rochal Das suggested the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Harmandir in Lucknow, that text was not as prominent in Rochal Das's movement as in Chandu Ram's movement. The role of the Guru

Granth Sahib reflects one aspect of the different responses within each movement to the diasporic challenge of forming Sindhi traditions. Rochal Das's title itself further demonstrates the alternative direction that his followers moved. While some of Chandu Ram's followers referred to him as a Sufi, the title for Rochal Das within the larger Sindhi community was consistently rendered as "Sufi Sant" in both English and Hindi. This terminology, along with the practices and teachings of Rochal Das and his successors, maintained both a Hindu identification and an acceptance of Islamic Sufi principles that differed from Chandu Ram's movement.

Although Rochal Das identified himself as a Hindu, not a Muslim, he took initiation into the Jahaniyan lineage through his Sufi master, Qutab Ali Shah. Various works discussing Rochal Das's life highlight this Islamic lineage. S. Gajwani, a follower of Rochal Das, titled his book about the lineage *A Sufi Galaxy*. Gajwani traces Qutab Ali Shah's Jahaniyan Sufi lineage back to Jalal Surkh Bukhari, who "belonged to the sixteenth generation after Hazrat Ali," the son-in-law of Muhammad (2000, 4). Qutab Ali Shah himself was born in Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1810. He emphasized *ishq haqiqi,* the Sufi concept of "Divine love," and recited his *kalam* (discourse) primarily in Sindhi, though he frequently used Persian, Hindi, and Sanskrit terms (2000, 8–49).

Exemplifying the communal harmony of Sindh that many Sindhis idealized, Qutab Ali Shah did not view his Islamic heritage as a barrier to other traditions. He practiced yoga, occasionally even in a Hindu goddess temple, and placed special emphasis on *pranayama* (breath control) (Gajwani 2000, 39). Rochal Das's son and successor, R. M. Hari, and Gajwani both identify several "Hindu scriptures" that Qutab Ali Shah enjoyed hearing, including the Bhagavad Gita, Japji, and Sukhmani Sahib (Hari 1995, 10; Gajwani 2000, 41). The inclusion of Japji and Sukhmani Sahib, which are compositions of Nanak and his successors, as "Hindu scriptures" demonstrates a Sindhi understanding of Sikhism as a branch within Hinduism. Qutab Ali Shah also accepted Hindu followers and provided separate housing and eating arrangements for them to accommodate their different dietary practices (Gajwani 2000, 41).

Rochal Das met Qutab Ali Shah while Rochal Das was completing his training to become a homeopathic doctor in Hyderabad, Sindh. Gajwani places this choice within a Hindu frame by asserting that the Hindu guru of Rochal Das's eldest brother appeared to Rochal Das in a vision to encourage him to take initiation from Qutab Ali Shah (2000, 147–149). With Qutab Ali Shah's inclusiveness, Rochal Das did not need to change his Hindu identification or reject Hindu texts or practices when he took initiation. Throughout his life, Rochal Das taught about the Bhagavad Gita and the Guru Granth Sahib, among other texts. Moreover, when Rochal

Das died in 1957, his followers cremated his body, further confirming his Hindu identification (Hari 1995, 418–419).

Nevertheless, Rochal Das clearly exhibited the influence of both his master's Islamic heritage and his inclusiveness. Rochal Das followed the Sufi practices and terminology of annihilating the self through concentrating on various figures. Rochal Das used the term "fana-fi-al-Sheikh" (annihilation of the self in the master) for his experience of merging into his master, Qutab Ali Shah. Following Qutab Ali Shah's encouragement to strive for absorption in various religious figures, Rochal Das described his experience of "fana-fi-al-Rasool" (annihilation of the self in the prophet) as including merging with Nanak, Krishna, Ram, Buddha, and Jesus, as well as the prophet (Gajwani 2000, 166; Hari 1995, 303). For the final two stages, Rochal Das used Vedantic concepts, describing the process as "the jiva becomes the Self," along with the traditional Sufi terms "fana-fi-Allah" (annihilation of the self in god) and "baqa-ba-Allah" (merging with god) (Hari 1995, 310).

After the upheavals of Partition, Rochal Das and his successors, his son and grandson, established an ashram in Ulhasnagar, a major Sindhi settlement outside Mumbai. In Ulhasnagar, they continued to follow a range of practices, including reciting the *kalam* of Sindhi Sufis and passages from the Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagavad Gita, and other texts (Hari 1995, 58, 222). Their celebration of holidays, such as Janmasthami, the birthday of Krishna, revealed the connections Rochal Das saw between Sufism and Hinduism. During a discussion about Krishna as a figure of divine love on Janmasthami in 1954, Rochal Das repeatedly used the Arabic term "*ishq*" for love and instructed musicians to sing the poetry of Muslim Sufis such as Sachal and Bedil (190–218).

The context of diaspora influenced developments within the movement. However, like the increasing veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Shiv Shanti Ashram, the direction of the changes in Rochal Das's movement was not toward the dominant understanding of Hinduism. In this movement, the enactment of their Sufi heritage developed further after Partition. In 1957, a follower of Rochal Das had a dream in which Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, a Sufi from twelfth century Sindh, declared, "You have forgotten me but I continue to look after you" (Hari 1995, 363). In the dream, Lal Shahbaz then directed them to celebrate Lal Shahbaz's *urs* (death anniversary of a *pir*) in Ulhasnagar as it is celebrated at his tomb in Sehwan, Sindh. When Rochal Das heard about the dream, he discussed Lal Shahbaz with his followers, telling them stories, including Imam Hussein foretelling Lal Shahbaz's birth, Lal Shahbaz memorizing the Qur'an, and Lal Shahbaz's observance of Ramadan, that placed Lal Shahbaz within an unambiguously Islamic heritage (364–366). Rochal Das proceeded to

identify himself and his followers as Lal Shahbaz's "spiritual progeny" and "great–grandchildren" (374). On his deathbed a few months later, Rochal Das placed each of his followers in the care of Lal Shahbaz.

Two years after Rochal Das's death, his followers began commemorating the *urs* of Lal Shahbaz in Ulhasnagar (Hari 1995, 374–375). Although this increasing prominence of the Muslim Sufi component of Rochal Das's background defies the external pressures to conform to the dominant definitions, it relates to the challenges of diaspora. Their separation from Sindh included a separation from the shrines of Sindhi Sufis such as Lal Shahbaz. Since they could not participate easily in the activities at the Sufi shrine in Sindh, they had to commemorate those events within their own movement, especially since their devotion to Sindhi Sufis never transferred to non-Sindhi Sufis in India.

However, in the context of Lucknow, a primary focus of the ritualized activities honoring Rochal Das was the Guru Granth Sahib, even though the community recognized him as a Sufi. This difference specifically reflected Rochal Das's unique relation to the Hari Om Mandir. The climax of the commemoration of Rochal Das's birthday at the Hari Om Mandir was the conclusion of the yearly reading of the Guru Granth Sahib. Over the course of a year, the regular reading of the Guru Granth Sahib proceeded through the entire text. After celebrating Rochal Das's birthday, the community began the cycle of the yearly reading again. The placement of a picture of Rochal Das against the base of the canopy near the Gurmukhi Guru Granth Sahib further reinforced this special connection. One particular devotee, Lila Advani, who was a leader at the Hari Om Mandir and the wife of a prominent disciple of Rochal Das, placed rose petals specifically on that image as she expressed her devotions each Sunday. In this situation, the emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib did not arise from a unique aspect of the broader diasporic context but from the specific history of the Sindhi community.

Literature in Rochal Das's Movement

The literature that Rochal Das's successors published retains much of the inclusive philosophy of his lineage. According to translations of various discourses that Rochal Das gave at the ashram in Ulhasnagar between 1952 and his death, Rochal Das used concepts and terms typically associated with Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi traditions interchangeably in a manner similar to Pursvani's biography of Asuda Ram. For example, in explaining a quote from Nanak's composition Sukhmani Sahib, Rochal Das said, "Better if a jiva remembers Allah than his own name" (Hari 1995, 92). A moment later,

he connected the Sanskrit term *ananda* (bliss) with Allah, saying, "The entire creation seeks ananda (bliss). Human beings, birds, beasts, plants, etc. want bliss, because Allah permeates everything and Allah is bliss" (92–93).

Works that his followers have composed similarly equate terms that non-Sindhis commonly identify with separate religions. Gajwani equates the Arabic terms "*talib* and *murshid*" (disciple and spiritual teacher) with the Sanskrit terms "*shishya* and *satguru*" (disciple and true teacher) and later uses "*satguru*" and "*murshid*" interchangeably (Gajwani 2000, 8). Rochal Das's successor, Hari, explicitly equates terms from Vedanta and Sufi traditions. For example, he states that Rochal Das "attained to the state of Oneness or non-duality which the Sufis call the state of *baqa-ba-Allah* and the Vedantists call the state of *turiya-atit*" (Hari 1992, vi–vii).

Hari also presents his own interpretations of texts, based on Rochal Das's teachings, in a manner that defends Hindu Sufi understandings. In his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, for example, his primary objective is to demonstrate that Vedanta and Sufism are the same. In bold on the front inner flap of the book jacket, Hari declares,

> Truth (Atma—Haq) is one and the same everywhere, at all times, and in all religions, because Truth is that which has no changeableness. . . . The apparent differences between them [Sufism and Vedanta] are because of semantic reasons (1982, 15).

As this quote illustrates, in a style that differs from Pursvani's writing and Rochal Das's discourses, Hari places Arabic terms in parentheses after Sanskrit terms to highlight their equivalence. For example, Hari uses "Atma" for the universal form of Krishna and frequently follows it with parenthetical appositives "(God—Haq)," "(Zaat—Haq)," or "(Allah)" (141, 168, 179). Explaining the fifteenth chapter of the Gita, he asserts, "There is nothing excepting Atma (La illaha ill Allah)," thus equating the Islamic profession of faith with a principle in the Gita (209).

While emphasizing these Sufi terms, Hari repeats the tendency of some Sindhis to broaden Sufism beyond Islam. Hari specifically asserts,

> Sufism is not a cult, or a sect, or a religion, or a school of thought followed by a select few; it is the spirit and the way of life that has influenced the people irrespective of caste, creed and religion (1995, 4).

He continues with the claims that Sindhi literature and folk music are almost entirely "Sufistic in content" as well as including some Hindu figures in the list of "brilliant" Sufis from Sindh (4).

A Contemporary Disciple

A prominent follower of Rochal Das who was also a homeopathic doctor, V. L. Advani was especially interested in the Sufi component of my research on Sindhi Hindus. Born in Sindh before Partition, his relation to Sufism began before taking initiation from Rochal Das. Advani remembered his morning walks with his paternal grandfather, who took him to pay obeisance to Muslim and Hindu figures in their village in Sindh. Advani's early experiences with Rochal Das also connected him with his familial heritage. In our first interview, he explained,

> VLA - He [Rochal Das] was a *sant,* so he had lots of spiritual disciples. He was the first homeopath in Sindh, a pioneer in Sindh and . . . I received my inspiration from him to study homeopathy.
>
> . . .
>
> SR - How did you hear about Dr. Rochal Das?
>
> VLA - He was spiritual guru of my father, who belonged to the same birthplace, Rohri, where first homeopathic clinic [was]. He was a disciple of Sufi saint Sayyid Qutab Ali Shah in Hyderabad, Sindh. Because he had medical education in Hyderabad, he came in contact with that, what you call, *murshid* or guru.
>
> So apart from his charitable homeopathic dispensaries, he was devoted to preach religion and to godly virtues. At his place there was discourse of religious books at 4 o'clock in the morning for approximately 2 hours, and in the evening also. The rest of the time he used to attend patients but without remuneration.

Advani's representation demonstrated the significance of his mentor, who inspired Advani to practice homeopathy as well as to follow his spiritual teachings. Before Partition, Advani had managed one of Rochal Das's homeopathic clinics in Sindh. His use of both "*murshid*" and "guru" in this quote to designate Rochal Das's relationship with Qutab Ali Shah reflects the challenge of labeling a relationship that defies the borders that commonly separate both religions and religious terms.

Later in the same interview, he described in more detail Rochal Das's teachings and philosophy.

> He had knowledge of Guru Granth Sahib, Gita, Upanishads. He used to explain even a single word of Gita and Guru Granth Sahib in such a minute explanation [the hearer] can understand relations with God.
>
> He was devotee of Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism. He used to teach [that] in every religion, one and the same thing, how we should be one with God. No

> hatred for Christianity, Muslims, Hinduism, Sikhism. Always remember God in whatever religion you want, the oneness of God.
>
> Apart from godly things, he taught how to be helpful with mankind. If you have money or energy, if you have abundance of anything, give to your neighbor or the needy.

These assertions displayed the emphasis on service to humanity and an inclusive philosophy that equated various religions, much as Hari's writings argued. In making that argument, of course, a recognition of the dominant understandings of the distinctiveness of each tradition arose, as Advani labeled Sikhism and Islam separately from Hinduism. Although such terms facilitated communication with the non-Sindhi majority, they presented another example of the ways the connotations of language limited the self-representations of Sindhi Hindus in diaspora.

As he listed texts important to Rochal Das, however, Advani did not include the Qur'an or anything specific to Muslim Sufis, even though he listed Islam as a tradition that Rochal Das honored. The closest that he came to a Sufi text was his assertion that Rochal Das used *bhajans* and *kalams,* which he explicitly connected with Hindus and the followers of Muhammad respectively. When I specifically mentioned the Qur'an in our third interview, Advani retracted to a list of texts typically defined as Hindu, ignoring even the Guru Granth Sahib. He then directly stated that Rochal Das did not use the Qur'an. Though Sufis frequently use the Qur'an, Advani's distinction between the Qur'an and Sufi elements distanced his use of the term "Sufi" from Islam.

Toward the end of the first interview, Advani had more explicitly universalized Sufism beyond Islam.

> Sufi means love. In Hindi we use *prem, pyār, mahbūb, iśq.* This is the main idea behind Sufism. They say it is only love in Bible. God is love, love is God.

The balance between two Sanskritic and two Arabic-derived terms for love subtly highlights the universal nature of love and reflects the Arabic influence that was also visible in some of the literature in Chandu Ram's movement. Advani then expanded Sufism's main concept further by invoking Christianity, apparently assuming that the Biblical reference would facilitate my understanding of the concepts as an American.

This universalized definition of Sufism became particularly important for representing Rochal Das outside of Sindh. It neutralized the apparent contradiction, based on dominant understandings, of following a Muslim Sufi while remaining Hindu. Advani also dismissed any difference between Hindu and Muslim spiritual teachers, asserting, "The names may change; the

intention, motive, purpose are the same." In an attempt to circumvent objections that he had heard previously from other non-Sindhis, he also dismissed the significance of Islamic influences on Sindhi traditions, explaining that it was natural since the majority of the province was Muslim.

On a personal level, Advani reflected broader Sindhi Hindu traditions. In his apartment, he and his wife, Lila Advani, had created a shrine with the Guru Granth Sahib, several deities, and various photos of gurus/*pirs*, including Rochal Das and Qutab Ali Shah. She conducted the daily rituals of opening, reading, and closing the Guru Granth Sahib. They were both active leaders at the Hari Om Mandir and periodically visited Chandu Ram's ashram as well as famous pilgrimage temples whenever they traveled to other parts of India. V. L. Advani also visited Rochal Das's *samadhi* in Ulhasnagar occasionally.

Although the term Sufi remained deeply important to Advani, his regular practices and pilgrimages placed as much importance on the Guru Granth Sahib and Hindu temples as Sufi traditions. Being separated from his master's home in Ulhasnagar, Advani frequented the Sindhi Hindu sites in Lucknow for both ritualized activities and spiritual development, even though their formations of Sindhi traditions differed from that of his guru. Moreover, his family's devotion to Sindhi Sufis before Partition generally did not transfer to non-Sindhi Sufis, as neither he nor his wife visited Sufi shrines in Lucknow. Considering these factors in diaspora, the universalized definition of Sufism became particularly significant for Advani, as his ritualized practices incorporated less specifically Islamic Sufi elements than his ancestors and guru did.

The formations of Rochal Das and his followers moved in a different direction than the increasing emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib in Chandu Ram's movement and created their own challenges. Since Islamic Sufi terminology and the Sufi label itself were particularly important in the movement, even as other elements in the Sindhi Hindu heritage, including the Guru Granth Sahib and various Hindu texts, remained significant, Rochal Das's successors and followers particularly emphasized the equality of religious terminology, the unity of all religions, and the universal definition of Sufism. Such an emphasis in their representations became particularly vital for devotees like Advani whose immersion in a diasporic environment, including his separation not only from Sindh but also from his guru Rochal Das's ashram and the majority of his followers who did not settle in Lucknow.

Cosmopolitan Hinduism: The Sadhu Vaswani Movement

The Sadhu Vaswani Movement has responded to the dispersal of Sindhi Hindus throughout the world, becoming a global Sindhi movement that

contrasts with the more limited spread of the movements associated with Rochal Das and Chandu Ram. This transnational character differs considerably from the transnationalism of Chandu Ram and has pushed the movement toward a different formation of Sindhi Hindu heritage. In contrast to the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib and the Sufi label in the previous two movements, the Vaswani movement increasingly presents itself as a mainstream Hindu movement that applies the principles of respect for all religions to create a cosmopolitan Hinduism that relates to a broader diasporic situation.

The life story of T. L. Vaswani, the founder of the movement, demonstrates both his Sindhi heritage and the influence of elements beyond Sindh. Vaswani was born in Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1879.[5] His mother had instilled in him a respect for the Sikh texts, which becomes evident in his writings about Guru Nanak. As a teacher in Calcutta, he became a disciple of Promothalal Sen, a nephew of Keshub Chandra Sen of the Brahmo Samaj Hindu reform movement, placing him in a non-Sindhi lineage that incorporated some of the ideas of various Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After he resigned his educational posts, he traveled across Sindh and other parts of India emphasizing spiritual truths from the Gita and other texts, while also supporting Indian nationalism. In his travels, he visited numerous shrines associated with Hindu and Muslim figures and spoke before various religious organizations, including groups identified as Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Sikh, and Jain (H. P. Vaswani 1975). In contrast to Chandu Ram's almost exclusive emphasis on Sindhi, T. L. Vaswani, with his experiences outside Sindh even before Partition, wrote numerous books in Hindi and English as well as Sindhi. These books incorporate a variety of teachings and the examples of figures ranging from Shah Abdul Latif and Nanak to Meera.

His successor, J. P. Vaswani, was born in Hyderabad, Sindh, in 1918. His father, who was T. L. Vaswani's elder brother, revered Sindhi and Persian Sufi poets. In his early twenties, J. P. Vaswani completed a Masters degree in Physics and then immediately forsook a career in education to devote himself fully to his uncle.[6] Both the Vaswanis moved to Pune following Partition and established the Sadhu Vaswani Mission there. When T. L. Vaswani died in 1966, J. P. Vaswani began leading the movement as it grew, developing centers around the world and expanding charitable activities based in Pune. J. P. Vaswani's childhood experiences, both in his immediate family and with his uncle, and his education and international travels fostered his familiarity with and respect for wisdom from a wide range of sources.

Despite the common Sindhi heritage of venerating Sufi *pirs,* the Guru Granth Sahib, and deities, the form of the Vaswani movement in the twenty-first century primarily emphasized the Vaswani lineage as a mainstream

Hindu guru movement. On the basis of my observations of events in Lucknow, Pune, Singapore, and Atlanta and discussions with Vaswani's followers, the regular *satsangs* at Sadhu Vaswani Centers around the world honored the guru lineage while enacting a clearly Hindu identification. They generally began with a few devotional songs, some of them coming from the Nuri Granth that T. L. Vaswani composed, and continued with recitations from sacred texts associated with Hinduism, such as the Gayatri Mantra from the Rig Veda. Unless J. P. Vaswani himself was present, the group typically watched a videotaped discourse by him, in Sindhi, Hindi, or English, that typically incorporated a variety of illustrations from various cultures. After the video, they performed *arti*, honoring pictures of J. P. Vaswani and T. L. Vaswani by singing "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare,*" waving a lamp, and offering *prasad*. The events concluded with the distribution of the *kara prasad* that they had presented to the pictures. Such a program differed from the *satsangs* that T. L. Vaswani led in the first half of the twentieth century primarily in the omission of recitations from the Guru Granth Sahib (H. P. Vaswani 1975, 228). This exclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib placed the regular *satsangs* more clearly within the borders of Hinduism as many non-Sindhis defined them.

When J. P. Vaswani visited Lucknow in 2001, his series of discourses, and the ritualized actions surrounding them, similarly venerated the guru lineage in a mainstream Hindu idiom with a cosmopolitan flair. Vaswani gave a discourse in Sindhi at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, seated next to Chandu Ram. The following two nights, Vaswani gave one discourse in English and one in Hindi on the field of the City Montessori School (CMS) in a suburban section of Lucknow. The range of languages in which Vaswani presented his discourses, much like the writings of his guru, highlighted both his continued concern for the Sindhi language and his competing desire to reach Sindhis and others who did not understand Sindhi, in contrast to the more exclusive emphasis on Sindhi language in Chandu Ram's movement.

Each evening's ritual included musicians singing Hindi *bhajans*. The demeanor of the musicians, who wore different coordinated outfits each night, along with the decor of the stage and the broadcast of the events on large projection screens at CMS, created a professional image for the movement. Following the Hindi *bhajans,* an older woman sang compositions from the Nuri Granth in "the sweet lyrical Sindhi language," as she described it.

On the second night, a non-Sindhi businessman from Lucknow introduced Vaswani. Reflecting the cosmopolitan tone of the event, he emphasized Vaswani's international stature, including his speeches at the United Nations, Kyoto, and Chicago. He characterized Vaswani's message as

drawing together people regardless of caste, creed, or color and emphasized Vaswani's use of both the Sermon on the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita. The mayor of Lucknow and the governor of Uttar Pradesh then escorted J. P. Vaswani to the stage.

After lighting a lamp before his guru's image, Vaswani sat in the solitary chair on the central stage to begin his English discourse, which he presented entirely from memory. Vaswani's discourse was neither a typical Hindu nor Sindhi presentation. He combined a variety of anecdotes and quotes with very practical suggestions about how to be happier by altering one's perceptions and attitudes. His clear English and the breadth of his stories and quotations revealed his broad education and experience as well as his respect for the wisdom that he saw in various Indian and non-Indian cultures. In this one lecture, he included illustrations relating to Krishna's advice to Arjuna from the Bhagavad Gita, the Bahai prophet Bahaullah, the Prophet Muhammad, and several American figures, including Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, and William James.

In fact, the version of Hinduism expressed in this discourse was so inclusive that it excluded most symbols of Hinduism beyond the veneration of images of the gurus, some devotional songs, and the brief reference to Krishna. This formation of a ritual scheme also ignored the Guru Granth Sahib and Sufi elements that were central in the other movements. The incorporation of anecdotes from sources around the world reflected an emphasis on a universal spirituality and represents an ideologically and practically different way of blending elements commonly associated with separate cultures and religions. When combined with the emphasis on dignitaries, multiple languages, and the professionalism of the production, this universal spirituality fostered a cosmopolitan image geared toward the affluent, transnational segment of the Sindhi community, which functions in multiple cultures simultaneously. Among these three Sindhi gurus, Vaswani, with his Western-style education and breadth of experiences, was uniquely suited to lead this type of transnational movement.

Despite the emphasis on the Vaswani lineage, the treatment of the Nuri Granth during Vaswani's discourses in Lucknow demonstrated the reduced importance that ritualized actions played in the Vaswani movement generally. Although J. P. Vaswani's sister asserted that the Nuri Granth "occupies the same importance as the Guru Granth Sahib in the case of Sikhs" (H. P. Vaswani 1975), only at Chandu Ram's ashram was the text treated with some of the signs of respect associated with the Guru Granth Sahib, as the Nuri Granth sat in a canopy on the stage with Chandu Ram and Vaswani. The following nights, the singer sang compositions from the Nuri Granth without any honored copy of the text present. The professional appearance of the activities at CMS suggested that

they could have arranged for a canopy to honor the Nuri Granth if they felt that it was important. The placement of the Nuri Granth in a canopy at the ashram reflected Chandu Ram's concern for ritualized respect for a variety of sacred texts, which the Vaswani Mission did not consider necessary to repeat elsewhere.

The emphases in the contemporary Vaswani movement were also evident in the commemoration of T. L. Vaswani's birthday. Beyond having a special *satsang* in Lucknow on that day, the focal point was the declaration of his birthday as International Meatless Day in memory of Vaswani's emphasis on nonviolence and vegetarianism. The leaders of the Vaswani Center in Lucknow were proud that the state government had recognized the day as a meatless day, meaning that certain activities in slaughterhouses and other businesses were restricted on that day. The Lucknow edition of the *Hindustan Times* discussed the impact of this meatless day declaration, including a reference to the zookeepers in the Lucknow Zoo being unable to feed the animals meat (Mathur 2001, 1). Other Vaswani centers around the world have commemorated the day by encouraging devotees and non-Sindhis to sign a pledge to refrain from eating meat on that day. These public emphases further position the movement within contemporary mainstream Hinduism, which is often seen as emphasizing nonviolence and vegetarianism.

The commemoration of T. L. Vaswani's 128th birthday in Atlanta in 2007 presented a slightly different emphasis, as the community recognized Satya Sai Baba and Nanak, both of whose birthdays occur in the days immediately preceding Vaswani's. In addition to including images of Satya Sai Baba and Nanak, Sikh musicians from Punjab who were serving the Sikh community in Atlanta at that time sang *kirtans* during the *satsang*. These varied elements reflected the specific dynamics within the Sindhi Hindu community of Atlanta, which maintained close ties to a Punjabi *gurdwara* and had several members who were active devotees of Satya Sai Baba. Thus, local centers within this transnational movement have some freedom to incorporate practices meaningful to their contexts. Nevertheless, the tone of this event, like the *satsangs* elsewhere, clearly emphasized Vaswani and maintained a generally Hindu idiom.

Literature in the Vaswani Movement

A review of the literature in the movement displays a similar shift from the breadth of Sindhi traditions to the dominance of mainstream Hindu and cosmopolitan elements. At Vaswani's discourses in Lucknow, they promoted a recent publication, *Dada Answers*. In the section on Hinduism

in this work, J. P. Vaswani emphasizes the uniqueness of Hindu traditions, asserting that other traditions are "tributaries" of Hinduism (2001, 120). He then refers to the Hindu religion as the "hope of the world" while also reiterating his opposition to proselytizing (124). The epigraph of this section presents a quote from Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, "The Sanathana Dharm, the Eternal Religion declared by the Rishis, will alone endure" (119). Including such a quote, without any contextualization, reinforces the superiority of Hinduism. When the Sadhu Vaswani Center in Singapore reprinted much of this section on Hinduism in a pamphlet, titling it "Hurrah!!! I'm a Hindu!" the editor repeats the combination of the respect for all religions and the superiority of Hinduism. According to the editor, J. P. Vaswani "believes in the unity of all races and religions in the One Spirit," but the editor concludes the page by admonishing youth to recognize Hinduism as "the right way" (Sadhu Vaswani Center 1990). If all traditions provide routes to the divine, Hinduism, according to the implied message in these materials, has the lone superhighway.

Beyond specific assertions of Hindu pride, much of the material from the movement emphasizes texts and other concepts typically recognized as Hindu. T. L. Vaswani's English paraphrase of the Bhagavad Gita holds a prominent position in the publications of the Mission. In the Introduction, T. L. Vaswani singles out the Gita as "India's richest gift to humanity" (2000, 17). Among the other topics discussed in *Dada Answers*, J. P. Vaswani addresses karma, yoga, the Gita, and vegetarianism, and he refers to the Gita extensively in a section on duty (2001). A biography of J. P. Vaswani that the movement published also emphasizes conceptions that are commonly identified as Hindu as it discusses Vaswani's previous births and the power of the stars to indicate, though not compel, events (Kumari, Sampath, and Gidwani 1998, 27, 86, 101).

However, like his discourses in Lucknow, the variety of materials that appear in the Mission's publications extends beyond a narrow emphasis on Hinduism to include many non-Indian sources. A series of J. P. Vaswani's devotional books, entitled *Snacks for the Soul,* draws spiritual truths from various sources, including anecdotes about Abraham Lincoln, the Prophet Muhammad, a *fakir* named Abu Hassan, Vivekananda, and others (2000, 225, 218, 254). The publisher's note in another book by J. P. Vaswani, which P. Jashnani, a leader of the Vaswani center in Lucknow, recommended to me, highlights Vaswani's position as a scientifically educated Hindu, declaring that the book "combines the wisdom of the best Indian traditions with the well-proven and scientific approach of western thinkers and philosophers" (1992, back cover).

The older literature and historical works in the movement reveal a different inclusivity that reflects more common expressions of Sindhi

heritage. One of T. L. Vaswani's books, appropriately titled *Lights from Many Lanterns*, presents Vaswani's translations from a range of texts and traditions that have ties to South Asia (n.d.b). It includes selections from the Qu'ran, the Vedas, and the Guru Granth Sahib, as well as the poetry of Gautama Buddha and several Hindu and Muslim figures, such as Chaitanya, Meera, Rumi, Rabia, and the prominent Sindhi Sufis Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal. Another publication from T. L. Vaswani *Guru Nanak: Prophet of Peace* compiles several of his discourses on elements commonly identified as Sikh. The "Publisher's Note" attests T. L. Vaswani's devotion to the Guru Granth Sahib and his significance as an interpreter of Nanak's teachings to Sindhis (Sajandas n.d., 7–8). Throughout these discourses, T. L. Vaswani asserts that Nanak loved both Hindus and Muslims and worked against the divisions of creed, caste, and race (n.d.a, 15, 18). Much like Pursvani's biography of Asuda Ram, T. L. Vaswani's use of terminology also suggests an absence of barriers, as he uses the Arabic-derived "fakir" for Muslims, Nanak, and the Buddhist emperor Ashoka (21, 22).

Sufis are not entirely excluded from more recent expressions of the Vaswani movement, in addition to references in *Snacks for the Soul*. Sufism was particularly prominent in a recorded lecture that J. P. Vaswani gave in the United States in 1996, which I watched on videotape at a *satsang* in Atlanta several years later. In this presentation, he admonished his listeners to be Sufis, which he defined as loving God and others. However, in the course of his discourse, he repeatedly referred to Islamic figures as examples of Sufis. In that sense, much like Chandu Ram's statements about Sufis, J. P. Vaswani connected Sufis with Islamic traditions historically but used the identification more broadly to connect to concepts of love and devotion to God.

Despite the emphasis on Sufism in this discourse, the shift within the movement from a Sindhi inclusiveness to a global inclusiveness was still evident. The prominence of Sufis and Sikh gurus has declined, at least in the past few decades, while references to various non-Indian sources of wisdom increased. T. L. Vaswani devoted more of his writing to figures commonly identified as Sikh and Sufi than J. P. Vaswani has. Similarly, while T. L. Vaswani visited various Sufi and Sikh sites (H. P. Vaswani 1975, 159, 199, 246), the biography of J. P. Vaswani referred to participation in other ritualized activities as a theoretical or exceptional activity. For example, in his presentation to the 1993 World Parliament of Religions, J. P. Vaswani highlighted the inclusive ideals of Hinduism, meaning that Hindus have no compunction with participating at a mosque, Zoroastrian fire temple, or Christian church (Kumari, Sampath, and Gidwani 1998, 297). The clearest reference to J. P. Vaswani practicing this ideal, however, highlighted the exceptional nature of his participation in *namaz* (Islamic

prayers). "Dada promptly knelt down and joined them in their *Namaz*! Dada's spontaneous gesture of devotion created such a beautiful bond of brotherhood and love..." (320). The exclamation point and adjectives like "spontaneous" suggest that the biographers considered this participation exceptional, not a regular practice for J. P. Vaswani, which creates a different image than the characterizations from T. L. Vaswani's biographers.

The overall representation that these publications create, when taken together, highlights an inclusive Hindu philosophy that has shifted over time. T. L. Vaswani honored the truths within a variety of traditions from India, especially emphasizing the Bhagavad Gita, Guru Granth Sahib, and Sindhi Sufis while participating in related ritualized activities. As the movement became more global and related to the successful transnational Sindhi diaspora, J. P. Vaswani carried this inclusiveness beyond India, increasingly emphasizing American and European material in his discourses while limiting his references to Sufi saints, Guru Nanak, and the Guru Granth Sahib. These shifts, combined with his glorification of Hinduism in recent publications, increasingly place the movement within the dominant understanding of Hinduism while maintaining an inclusive, transnational focus.

Contemporary Followers

A follower of J. P. Vaswani and a leader of the Sadhu Vaswani Center in Lucknow, P. Jashnani was born after Partition in Malaysia, where her family had settled. She studied in a Vaswani institution in Pune before moving to Lucknow after her marriage to the son of a successful retailer in the city. She emphasized reformist critiques of Hindu practices as she described her experiences following Vaswani. She asserted,

> After believing in Dada, I became less superstitious. Hinduism has too many superstitions and too much idol worship. Dada emphasizes karma.... His main philosophy comes from the Gita. At the *satsang* we recite a few verses from the Gita. His teachings are all about the Gita.

When I asked her to explain further what superstitions she left, she refrained from specifying activities, describing instead how she became more accepting of her life and more focused on the needs of others. Although she refrained from specifying "superstitions," she implicitly connected image worship with that pejorative category. While several other Sindhis connected the ideas of reformed Hinduism, especially the rejection of faulty rituals and image worship, with Nanak, Jashnani highlighted instead

J. P. Vaswani's emphasis on the Gita. This assertion kept her critique of Hinduism within a mainstream Hindu identification and coincided with the movement's de-emphasis on some ritualized elements. A Vaswani follower in Singapore similarly made a common Hindu reformist conception, stating, "Brahmins promote the superstitions of the uneducated."

Another exchange in my interview with Jashnani highlighted this diminished role of ritualized activities. Jashnani had recently acquired a copy of the Nuri Granth for her home to facilitate hosting *satsangs*. However, when I asked her if she opened it each morning like a Guru Granth Sahib, she said that she had not begun that practice yet. Then she quickly declared, "But I am going to." While many Sindhis considered a failure to perform the proper actions with any copy of the Guru Granth Sahib to be a serious lapse, her stated intention to begin similar actions confirmed my interpretation of the absence of a canopy at Vaswani's discourses at CMS, Lucknow. Ritualized restrictions were not strictly applied to the Nuri Granth.

Although Jashnani's discussion of the Vaswani movement emphasized reformed Hindu elements, she maintained some of the ritualized activities of her childhood in Malaysia, most notably visiting a *gurdwara*.

> I go to the *gurdwara* for 10–15 minutes just to pray, but I do not stay for a long time, listening to all the words. I don't believe in pleasing the gods or wasting time sitting there.

While she had earlier rejected visiting temples, this exchange clearly suggested that she considered praying in the largest *gurdwara* in Lucknow to be worth the effort to go there. After that admission, she quickly reiterated her de-emphasis on ritualized activities, noting the brevity of her prayers. This exchange further suggests the decreased importance of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Vaswani movement, since a follower who personally venerated the Guru Granth Sahib did so only outside the movement.

Having heard J. P. Vaswani identify himself as a Sufi, I asked Jashnani if a Sufi identification was appropriate for him. After she assented, I asked her what the term meant, and she referred to the "special qualities" that distinguish a Sufi. Since the only specific trait that she mentioned was the celibacy of both Vaswanis, she never connected it explicitly with Islam, as Vaswani did in the videotaped discourse. She did not struggle with answering the question as much as Ahuja did at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, but her answer never revealed a familiarity with Vaswani's definition of Sufism, further suggesting the lack of emphasis on Sufism within the contemporary Vaswani movement.

In the activities and representations of the Vaswani movement, its focus on affluent, transnational Sindhi Hindus became clear. The literature

and the new ritual schemes in the movement stressed the veneration of a guru, social service, and the inclusion of wisdom from many sources, while de-emphasizing certain ritualized activities. Such selections directed the movement away from the emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib in Chandu Ram's movement or Sufi elements in Rochal Das's movement and toward a particular Hindu identification that matched prominent understandings of a reformed and inclusive Hinduism.

Diverse Formations in Diaspora

Although continual change is a common element in the history of religious movements, the experiences of Partition and rebuilding lives and communities in diaspora forced Sindhis to deal with change more consciously. The shifts in the activities of these movements ultimately defined each movement as a unique example of Sindhi traditions, as their activities and representations reflected different responses to the challenges of diaspora. The physical separation from Sindhi Sufi shrines pushed Rochal Das's followers to increase aspects of their Sufi heritage, while the Vaswani movement expanded the inclusiveness of Sindhi Hindu ideals to a global level to address the transnational dynamic of the Sindhi Hindu diaspora. The increasing emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib in Chandu Ram's movement and the occasional use of a Sufi identification forced his followers to respond to challenges from non-Sindhis, creating a defensiveness in their representation of their practices that reinforced their distinctive heritage. Similarly, the North Indian connotations of the Sufi terminology used in each movement highlights the challenge that the limits of language creates for diasporic communities such as Sindhi Hindus.

Although collectively these movements challenge both homogenizing definitions of religions and the assumptions that Sindhis would lose their distinctive traditions in diaspora, they do not convey fully the variety among Sindhi Hindus. Even the personal practices and understandings of their committed followers differed from the elements that each guru emphasized, as in Jashnani's continued visits to *gurdwaras* and Advani's dispersed activities. Moreover, the varied emphases in these three movements did not exhaust the variety of choices made in other Sindhi Hindu movements that were not prominent in Lucknow. For example, in Chennai, the followers of the Sindhi spiritual leader Shahenshah maintained a religious site, Sufidar, that in both name and practice resembled Rochal Das's emphasis on Sufism while also incorporating an even wider array of elements. While the central room had a large image of Shahenshah, another

room included elements focusing on Dastagir, a non-Sindhi Sufi Muslim to whom they regularly recited special prayers. Moreover, both rooms were filled with numerous additional two- and three-dimensional images, including a variety of deities (such as Ganesh, Lakshmi, and Jhule Lal) (see cover photo), Arabic calligraphy, images of *pirs* and their *dargahs,* Guru Nanak and his successors, the Guru Granth Sahib, Jesus, and more.

This broad range of practices throughout the Sindhi Hindu community should not result in simply an atomistic view of the community, where each group and individual promotes their own idiosyncratic understandings. Clear connections maintain the ties between these movements and within the Sindhi Hindu community more generally. The common pride among Sindhi Hindus about their ethnic identification and homeland remains palpable, even as the tie of a common language diminishes in diaspora. The common veneration of Sindhi elements is evident in the inclusion of these three movements among the six guru images in the Hari Om Mandir. Moreover, during J. P. Vaswani's first lecture in Lucknow in 2002, Chandu Ram and Vaswani sat on the platform together and specifically praised the work and teachings of each other, even though these two leaders had pushed the emphases of their movements in clearly different directions.

Beyond these physical expressions of community, common elements unite these movements and Sindhi Hindus in general. Considering these three movements, each of them emphasized both a Hindu identification and their Sindhi heritage, while a concern about preserving Sindhi language and identity clearly influenced each movement, though to varying degrees. On a more specific level, all three used elements that are significant in many accounts of Sindhi traditions, most notably the Bhagavad Gita, deities, the Guru Granth Sahib, Nanak, and Sindhi Sufis, though each movement placed the elements in different positions relative to each other. While all gurus with a Sindhi heritage did not include each of these elements, these examples represent three variations on a common religious heritage that further challenges over-generalized understandings of religions.

Chapter 4

Presenting Sacred Figures

According to various Sindhi Hindu accounts, in the tenth century CE, Hindus in Sindh were living peaceably under Muslim rulers, until the unthinkable happened. Mirkhshah, a ruler in Sindh, summoned the leaders of the Hindus and, with the encouragement of several advisers, declared that all Hindus must convert to Islam or be killed. In response to their pleading, Mirkhshah gave the Hindus some time to make their choice.

Contemplating their options, the distraught Hindus gathered along the banks of the Indus River to pray for deliverance. A voice came from the river, declaring that a god would take form as a child to deliver them from this evil. Soon afterward, the deity Jhule Lal was born in Sindh to humble parents. When Mirkhshah learned that some of the Hindus believed that their god had taken birth to rescue them, he sent his minister to investigate. When the minister found the infant Jhule Lal, the powers of the infant amazed him. While he was looking in the crib, the baby suddenly became a young man, then an old man, and then a baby again. During another encounter, he witnessed Jhule Lal riding upstream on a fish in the Indus River. The minister reported these strange events to Mirkhshah, who became afraid, but his other advisers encouraged him to remain firm in response to these "tricks."

Torn between the conflicting assertions of his minister and the other advisers, Mirkhshah eventually decided to meet Jhule Lal. When Jhule Lal arrived at Mirkhshah's palace, he impressed Mirkhshah with his understanding of Islam, telling Mirkhshah that the Qur'an forbade forced conversions and that Allah and the god of the Hindus were the same. Mirkhshah's advisers, however, convinced Mirkhshah to disregard Jhule Lal's teachings and to arrest him. When Mirkhshah's guards approached Jhule Lal, simultaneously an inferno and a flood engulfed the palace. In

desperation, Mirkhshah relented and reversed his decree that all Hindus must convert. He then begged Jhule Lal to save his palace and courtiers, and Jhule Lal graciously caused the waters to recede and the flames to be extinguished. Greatly relieved, Mirkhshah and many other Muslims began to worship Jhule Lal, along with the Hindus who worshiped him as both their god and savior. Even today, a shrine to Jhule Lal in Sindh attracts both Hindus and Muslims who worship the sacred figure.

Agency and Identification in the Stories of Sacred Figures

This story of the savior of Sindhi Hindus brings together the competing issues of the harmony of Sindh and the animosity some Sindhis felt toward Muslims that have been visible in the representations of various Sindhis in Lucknow. Rather than the historical harmony being disrupted by the agony of Partition, this case inverts the relationship as the historical animosity is resolved as Muslims implicitly submit to Hindu superiority by worshipping Jhule Lal. As in the preceding synopsis, which I have compiled from several elements of Jhule Lal's appearance that Sindhi Hindus frequently retold and published, issues of representation, agency, and identification are not limited to the formation of institutions and ritualized practices. Communities and individuals use stories and design visual images that support particular identifications and ideologies. Many Sindhi Hindu writers and storytellers explicitly weave particular interpretations of the events into the retelling, demonstrating that retellings often become commentaries in themselves. Naturally, Muslims who venerate Jhule Lal often presented different stories about his significance that reflected their worldview and understanding of religious traditions.

Such efforts to use stories and images of sacred figures to support ideological positions were certainly not limited to Jhule Lal. The analyses of hagiographies of several gurus in the previous chapter demonstrate how the elements of the story conformed to the understandings of the writers and promoted a particular view of the community. Stories and visual images were also important regarding another vital figure in the community, Nanak. In addition to connecting Jhule Lal and Nanak as *avatars* (a deity taking human form) of Vishnu, several Sindhis specifically emphasized the centrality of both Jhule Lal and Nanak for Sindhi Hindus.

While I address the public celebrations of the birthdays of Jhule Lal and Nanak in the next chapter, a broader analysis of the images, both narrative and iconographic, of these two central figures provides a general

understanding of their roles in the community, which further enhances the analysis of the festivals. Comparing these various images that Sindhi Hindus constructed with the images that Sindhi Muslims and Sikhs emphasized highlights the different general understandings between these communities and the ways each community promoted their positions while ignoring or specifically rejecting the images that the other communities emphasized.

Jhule Lal

Jhule Lal has become one of the most important deities for Sindhi Hindus. One image published on the front cover of a Sindhi literary magazine in Lucknow shows Jhule Lal in the center with various spiritual and historical figures from Sindh surrounding him like rays around the sun (*Sindhī gulśan* 2001). Several Sindhis interpreted this image as demonstrating the centrality of Jhule Lal for Sindhi Hindus. Since Jhule Lal fits generally within the dominant definitions of Hinduism as one of the multitude of deities, emphasizing the importance of Jhule Lal as "the Sindhi god" satisfied both of the conflicting concerns of many Sindhis as it distinguished Sindhis from other Hindus while still confirming their identification as Hindus.

Perhaps because Jhule Lal fit with both diasporic concerns, the significance of Jhule Lal increased after Partition (Markovits 2000, 285; YSA 2006, 10). Before Partition, Jhule Lal was important to some Sindhi Hindus, but he was not a universal Sindhi figure. With the migration from Sindh and the despair that followed the losses of Partition, Ram Panjwani intentionally chose to emphasize Jhule Lal and the celebration of his birthday, Cheti Chand, as unifying elements for the Sindhi Hindu community. He wanted to both bring them together and provide hope and pride in those difficult times (YSA 2006, 10). Panjwani's emphasis took root in many Sindhi Hindu communities, as seen in the addition of Jhule Lal by Sindhis to institutions in Lucknow, Chennai, Singapore, and Fairfax Station, Virginia, among other places.

Stories of Jhule Lal

Despite the sense of unity that Panjwani wanted Jhule Lal to bring, the accounts of Jhule Lal contained many differences as Sindhi Hindus selected particular elements to emphasize or ignore. The variations within

the multiple versions of the story of Jhule Lal that I received and heard from Sindhi Hindus illustrate more than their agency. The differing versions highlight the ideological points that each teller drew from the story. These various versions also illustrate the significance of the conflicted themes of harmony and bitterness toward Muslims that other assertions of Sindhi Hindus have similarly demonstrated.

In the version of the story of Jhule Lal that opens this chapter, the main points of the story for many Sindhi Hindus are clear. The Hindus appear as virtually powerless subjects against tyrannical Muslim rulers. With the appearance of Jhule Lal and his miraculous demonstrations, the balance of power shifts, and at least some of the Muslims submit to the power of Jhule Lal. Therefore, the appearance of communal conflict resolves with the submission of Muslims to the savior of the Hindus. This type of conclusion reiterates the common Sindhi valorization of the communal harmony of Sindh in the conclusion of the story while also depicting some Muslims as oppressing Hindus through the fanaticism of Mirkhshah and his advisers.

A secondary point in this composite version, which also correlated with many Sindhi representations outside of discussions of Jhule Lal, is the superiority of the Hindus over the Muslims. The devout Hindus remained committed to their religious traditions, even in the face of death, while Mirkhshah was indecisive in his religious pronouncements, waffling depending on which adviser spoke last. Moreover, his more fanatical advisers and Mirkhshah, when he was listening to them, were misunderstanding their own religion. It took the intervention of a Hindu deity to teach Mirkhshah the proper interpretation of the Qur'an, which these Sindhi stories equated with the rejection of forced conversions, and the true reality of religious traditions in general, specifically the commonality of Allah and the gods of the Hindus.

Despite these general elements, the various published and verbal accounts of Jhule Lal's story relate multiple details, even about basic aspects of the story. For example, Gobind K. Wadhwani, the former president of the Hari Om Mandir, specifically acknowledged two accounts of Jhule Lal's appearance, one being his birth, as described earlier, and the other being his manifestation from the river, riding on a fish. Even the name of Jhule Lal varies considerably, as accounts connect him to the names Udero Lal, Zinda Pir, Amar Lal, and Darya Sahib (Memon 2000, 198; Thakur [1959]). Whether these variations reflect the conflation of different traditions into one composite figure, subregional variations, or the multiple names that both humans and divine figures often have is difficult to discern.

Whatever the source of the multiplicity of details, those retelling and commenting on the stories often selected which variations they included and excluded to promote particular ideas. For example, an account published in English on the Web site of the Young Sindhi Adults (YSA) organization in North America details that the name Jhule Lal means "rocking" and reflects his miraculous powers when, as a baby, he caused his cradle to rock constantly, like the waves of the Indus River (YSA 2006, 3). Another published account attributed to A. C. Hemnani, the president of the Hari Om Mandir during the period of my fieldwork, provides a different explanation of the name Jhule Lal, suggesting that it came from a song about rocking a son that women sang to the endearing baby Jhule Lal (Hemnani n.d.). Each description, therefore, develops different aspects of the character that this appearance of the divine took.

Other aspects of the story emphasize the Hindu identification of the community in other ways that were congruent with the dominant understandings of Hinduism. Presenting other names for Jhule Lal, the YSA account connects the name Udero Lal to Sanskrit, as, according to this version, "udero" is a Sanskrit word meaning "from the water." This version carries this Sanskrit etymology further to reinforce the association of Jhule Lal with the Vedic water god Varuna (YSA 2006, 3). The beginning of the story as reproduced in one Hindi pamphlet in Lucknow places Sindh at the center of Hindu civilization, much as several interviewees did. This pamphlet specifically refers to the origins of the name Hindustan, the composition of the Rig Veda along the Sindhu River, and the archaeological site of Mohen Jo Daro. Recounting the oppression of Sindhis, as Muslims "*janeu tathā śikhaon ko kāṭnā* (Cut the sacred thread and top knot of hair)," this pamphlet highlights the Hindu identification of the victims of the Muslim ruler by referencing these two common symbols of particularly devout, upper caste Hindus (Bhagchandani n.d.). Such an assertion also highlights the intolerant cruelty of Muslims who attacked the religious symbols of the Hindus.

Various aspects of the accounts similarly emphasized Jhule Lal's connection with Hinduism, as commonly understood. While individual Sindhis frequently referred to Jhule Lal as either a manifestation of the Vedic water god Varuna or an *avatar* of Vishnu, the published account by Hemnani conflates these connections, asserting "that Lord Vishnu would emerge as Varuna in human form" (Hemnani n.d.). This version further connects the "Bal Leelas (childhood play)" of the infant Jhule Lal with the play of baby Krishna. Without explaining the relationship of Krishna and Varuna specifically, the YSA account connects both figures to Jhule Lal, asserting that the distraught Hindus thought of Krishna's promise in the Bhagavad Gita to take human form whenever sin increased and faithfulness was threatened, so they

turned to their god Varuna (2006, 2). This same version recounts Jhule Lal being nursed by his stepmother, after his mother's death, and relates it to Ram, another *avatar* of Vishnu, whose stepmother nursed him (3).

In contrast, an article published in the English language *Indian Express* newspaper in Lucknow on the occasion of Cheti Chand in 2002, begins with a reference to the lack of Hindu or Muslim orthodoxy in Sindh. However, it later emphasizes Hindu elements in relation to Jhule Lal, who "became steeped in Vedic lore, even in his teens" (*Indian Express* 2002a, 4). This article also asserts that the religious tolerance and universal love that Jhule Lal taught are "the cardinal principles of Hindu religion." Drawing on the general characteristics of the Hindus and Muslims at the beginning of the story, this article resembles contemporary Hindu Nationalist rhetoric as it declares, "[Jhule Lal] filled the shrinking Hindus with courage and martial spirit, revealed to them the abiding glories of their religion, and put holy terror into the persecuting Muslims."

Several oral representations of Jhule Lal reiterated the animosity that some Sindhi Hindus held toward Muslims in a manner that also reflected Hindu Nationalist sentiments. A few interviewees placed Jhule Lal's appearance as responding to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the eighteenth century instead of a particular Sindhi ruler. This change reflected the common characterization of Aurangzeb as a fanatical, oppressive Muslim emperor, which Hindu Nationalist rhetoric often highlighted. One of these interviewees specifically contrasted Aurangzeb's arrogance with the peace-loving nature of the Sindhi Hindus. While discussing Jhule Lal, Gobind Wadhwani described Islam as "an aggressive religion based on deceit." However, reflecting the ambiguity in Sindhi Hindu attitudes toward Muslims, in our next interview Gobind Wadhwani used Jhule Lal as an example of the harmonious relations between Hindus and Muslims in Sindh, since Sindhi Muslims celebrated Cheti Chand with the Hindus.

Along similar lines, many versions of Jhule Lal's story maintain an equation of harmony with Hinduism as they resolve the conflict by having Muslims become devotees of Jhule Lal. The version in the Hindi pamphlet presents Jhule Lal as teaching the Muslim ruler about religious harmony, saying, "*Īśvar ek hai. Dharma rupī mārg anek haĩ lekin sab dharmo kā ucheśya īśvar kī prāpti hai.* (God is one. *Dharma* has many paths, but the motive of all *dharmas* is to reach God.)" (Bhagchandani n.d.). Connecting tolerance with proper Islamic practice, the *Indian Express* article asserts that Jhule Lal told the "Muslim fanatics" that they were disobeying the Qur'an (2002a, 4). While tolerance here is a quality of true Islam, the Muslims only realize this truth through the actions of a Hindu figure.

Another interesting variation surrounds Jhule Lal's subjugation of the Muslim ruler. The synopsis at the start of this chapter reflects the YSA

account. As water inundated Mirkhshah's court, it also caught fire. Jhule Lal then told Mirkhshah, "Your God and mine are not two different ones," and "God wanted unity in diversity" (YSA 2006, 6). While this first statement produces some uncertainty about Jhule Lal's status as a god, they both clearly fit with some Sindhi Hindu assertions of religious unity and tolerance. Hemnani's published version similarly maintains the concepts of nonviolence and tolerance that many Hindus use to distinguish their traditions. When Jhule Lal leads an army out of the Indus River, the Muslim king realizes his defeat is imminent and bows before Jhule Lal, who mercifully forgives him without injuring anyone (Hemnani n.d.). In the *Indian Express* article, the king submits after seeing the miraculous events surrounding Jhule Lal as a child, although it later refers to Jhule Lal's martial leadership of the Hindus (*Indian Express* 2002a, 4).

The Hindi pamphlet gives the longest account of this part of the story. This version included the debate between Mirkhshah's minister, who wanted Mirkhshah to relent, and his advisors, who convinced him to remain firm in his demands so that Islam would spread. This version, therefore, accentuates the diverse attitudes among the Muslims while placing the primary blame on the fanatical religious advisors. This version also reduced the prominence of the miraculous defeat of Mirkhshah, as Jhule Lal's father secretly organized a military force from the independent rulers of Sindh, which Jhule Lal led to victory (Bhagchandani n.d.). Such a conclusion to the story also highlights the martial power of the Hindus, as opposed to the more nonviolent accounts.

Despite the variations and the specific ideological points that they raise, these versions and tellings generally support the primary ideas that many Sindhi Hindus wanted to promote. Reflecting the negative side of the conflicting attitudes that Sindhis presented toward Islam, the story surrounding Jhule Lal confirms the Hindu identification of the Sindhi community by placing them in direct opposition to Muslim oppressors. More specifically, these versions all portray Hindus as tolerant, devout people in contrast to fanatical, oppressive Muslims who do not even follow the morality within their own Qur'an. As these devout Hindus are Sindhi, their refusal to immediately convert, even when threatened with death, reinforces Sindhi adamancy about their Hindu identification.

Contestations over Jhule Lal

These representations of the story of Jhule Lal are not accepted universally, even among Sindhi Hindus. Occasionally, Sindhi Hindus denied that Jhule Lal is a deity. In representations to another non-Indian researcher in

the United States, several respondents rejected the label of deity, instead referring to Jhule Lal as a prophet or a savior of Sindhi Hindu traditions or culture (Wilson 2005, 11). The motives for these different assertions were not entirely clear. Perhaps some Sindhi Hindus who have immigrated to the United States chose to downplay the deity status to non-Indians who might be less favorable to polytheism, or perhaps the plethora of deities did not fit with an individual Sindhi's rationalist or scientific view of the world. A desire to match common versions of the Hindu pantheon, which typically ignore Jhule Lal, might also have been a factor.

Perhaps more significantly, although it is true that many Muslims in Sindh venerate a figure associated with Jhule Lal and shared shrines exist, Muslims usually do not characterize the figure that they venerate as an incarnation of Vishnu or an appearance of Varuna. A common Sindhi Muslim account identified Jhule Lal as a Sufi *pir* related to Sindh. In fact, this connection is evident in one of the names for Jhule Lal, Zinda Pir, which literally means the eternal *pir.* Therefore, the implication that Muslims began to worship a Hindu deity did not reflect the story that Muslims emphasize concerning Jhule Lal. Moreover, in opposition to the specific ideological construction about Muslim fanatics and Hindu superiority, one Muslim representation of Jhule Lal is the reverse of the Hindu version, implying the moral superiority of the Muslim characters.

Most Muslim accounts associate Jhule Lal with an enigmatic figure in the Qur'an who is associated with the water of life, the equivalent of the fountain of youth. In the Qu'ran (18:60–82), a unique servant of God, whom Musa (Moses) finds at the confluence of two bodies of water, demonstrated to Musa a knowledge of the hidden that justifies certain actions that appear to Musa as unlawful. According to the Qur'anic account, this figure also appears in each age to teach people to connect to the divine. While the Qu'ran does not name this figure, most commentators, relying on the *hadith* (traditions and sayings of Muhammad), identify this story with Khizr, or more respectfully Khwaja Khizr. They also debate his status as a saint, prophet, or other figure, and the nature and source of his hidden knowledge (Omar 1993, 280–286; Albayrak 2003, 297–305). Both Khizr's knowledge, which differs from the law that Musa received, and his mission to teach people to relate to the divine resemble aspects of many understandings of Sufism.

Seen by some as patron saint of sailors and travelers, Muslim stories about Khizr in Sindh present him as the savior of at least one distressed Muslim traveler. Ironically, a prominent account of Khizr identifies the source of this distress as a Hindu ruler. On the way to participate in the Hajj in Mecca, a Muslim father and daughter traveled down the Indus River from Delhi. A lecherous Hindu king spied the beautiful daughter

and demanded that she become his wife. When the father refused the request because the king was not Muslim, the king attempted to take her by force. The daughter prayed to Khwaja Khizr, who instructed them to free their boat from its moorings. When they followed his instructions, Khwaja Khizr reversed the course of the river, which then carried the relieved father and daughter away from the cruel king (Coomaraswamy 1989, 157–167; Memon 2000, 200).

The reversals in this account demonstrate the ideological purposes of both this version and, by contrast, the many Hindu versions. The Muslims are now the devout ones, traveling to Mecca, and the Hindu ruler is cruel and unscrupulous. This story also suggests that the different religious identifications were the reason for rejecting the marriage proposal, which further highlights the Muslim father's devout commitment to marry his daughter only to a Muslim. Absent in this version, however, is the shift to communal harmony that many stories of Jhule Lal emphasize. The Hindu king does not become a follower of Khwaja Khizr. Apparently, the Hindu emphasis on the harmony of pre-Partition Sindh was not as important to the Muslim devotees of Khwaja Khizr.

Nevertheless, the parallels between this story and the Hindu story of Jhule Lal remain clear and support the suggestion of a connection between the two figures. Khizr, like Jhule Lal, saves the devout when they pray at the river and does so by showing mastery over the river, in this case changing its course rather than bringing an army out of the river or causing the inundation of Mirkhshah's palace. The connection between the figures is also apparent in the visual images of them, as both wear a tunic and ride on a fish in the river.

Some of the Sindhi Hindu accounts of Jhule Lal use this connection to further their own assertions. While many Sindhi Hindu stories emphasize Muslim veneration of a Hindu god, the *Indian Express* article has the minister of Mirkhshah declare the unity of Khizr and Jhule Lal, declaring that they are "two names of the same holy man" (*Indian Express* 2002a, 4). This interpretation clearly establishes equality, though it places Jhule Lal in an Islamic perspective as a holy man, not as a god. The YSA account, however, clearly places priority on Jhule Lal, as it asserts that Jhule Lal "as Khwaja Khizr swam against the flow of the river" (2006). Therefore, Khwaja Khizr becomes an appearance of Jhule Lal, using language similar to descriptions of Vishnu's *avatars*.

In contrast to the Sindhi Hindu accounts, several academic works have suggested that the connection of these two figures arose from the conversion of Hindus to Islam, rather than the conversion of the Muslims to the veneration of Jhule Lal. One account suggests that Hindu converts to Islam maintained their old deities, reinterpreting them as holy men and

turning Hindu shrines into *dargahs*, therefore giving priority to the Hindu conception as the original (Dawani 2002, 65). Another work describes a similar process, without assuming the priority of the Hindu figure. The spread of the tale of Khizr into South Asia was an example of substitution, with Khizr filling the position of "Hindu gods of the water" (Currie 1989:10). Therefore, Khizr existed independently of the Hindu deities and then takes their place. Neither has full priority but developed in different cultural contexts.

Differences in the veneration of Jhule Lal also belie the common Sindhi Hindu emphasis on the harmony through Jhule Lal. Even when Hindus and Muslims worshiped at the same shrine, they did not automatically worship the same figure in the same way. For example, Muslims and Hindus disagreed over the control of one shrine associated with Zinda Pir / Khwaja Khizr. Eventually, the Hindus gave up and established a different shrine of their own (Memon 2000, 198). According to a tradition surrounding another shared site named Udero Lal, the reputed location of the disappearance or death of Jhule Lal became a source of contention between his Hindu and Muslim followers, as they each wanted to commemorate his disappearance with a different type of structure. The Mughal emperor Shah Jahan heard of the dispute and intervened, sponsoring the construction of a shrine that incorporated aspects that both communities wanted (Dawani 2002, 66). This tradition does not fit with the typical Sindhi Hindu account of Jhule Lal, as Shah Jahan ruled seven centuries after the period typically attributed to Jhule Lal's appearance. The assertion of some Sindhis that Jhule Lal saved their ancestors from the oppression of Aurangzeb creates a similar problem. Since Aurangzeb ruled after Shah Jahan, Jhule Lal's disappearance, and the resulting disputes, would have had to occur before Jhule Lal's appearance for Shah Jahan to resolve them. While these accounts fail to establish a verifiable history of the veneration of Jhule Lal / Khwaja Khizr in Sindh, they clearly illustrate some of the ideological points that each community found significant.

However the site developed historically, the shrine at Udero Lal in Sindh supports the Sindhi Hindu assertions that Muslims and Hindus worship at shared sites, though the nature of "sharing" is not exactly what those assertions typically imply. Containing a tomb with a mosque on one side and a temple and *samadhi* on the other, the site incorporated appropriate elements from each tradition to commemorate the disappearance or death of a sacred figure (Dawani 2002, 67). B. S. Balani, an interviewee who had visited Udero Lal as an adult because her husband's parents resided in Sindh, described the shrine at Udero Lal as the birthplace of Jhule Lal. The temple side of the shrine was under the management of Hindus, including the temple trust that, she asserted, held large tracts of land. The Hindu

side also included a well associated with his miraculous appearances that she considered a central component of the shrine. Balani further explained that Muslims controlled the other half of the site, which included a shrine where Muslims venerated the figure known as Zinda Pir. Although she did not go into detail about the Muslim side of the site, presumably because it was not important in her visit there, her description reflected the ways each community placed Jhule Lal within their own religious sensibilities.

On a different note, contemporary devotional practices among Sindhi Hindus reverses the primacy of Hinduism in their accounts of Jhule Lal. The most common *bhajan* associated with Jhule Lal was the Sindhi song "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar*," the refrain of which repeats the phrase "*Jhūle Lāl, Jhūle Lāl, Jhūle Lāl.*" As the reference to *qalandar* (Sufi master) in the title of the song suggests, it was originally associated with the Sufi *pir* whose *urs* Rochal Das's followers began to commemorate, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. Therefore, Sindhi Hindus expressed their veneration of Jhule Lal through a song that some Sufis still used to honor a Muslim *pir.* Instead of conjuring the story of Jhule Lal, where Muslims worshiped a Hindu deity, this element of their practices suggests the strong influence of Muslim Sufis on Sindhi practices, as also seen in discussions of the guru movements in the previous chapter.

Many Sindhi Hindus, however, did not recognize this understanding of the song. One interviewee asserted, for example, that it was first sung to commemorate the victory of Jhule Lal. Another translated its title as "Mast Qalandar means always happy. The first line refers to God; Mast Qalandar denotes god, who is always happy." The representations by YSA, in contrast, recognized the dual association of the song, asserting that it was created to honor both figures (2006, 9). The different understandings of the song and the various other contestations surrounding Jhule Lal further highlight the agency of various communities and individuals to interpret and represent their sacred figures and stories to bolster their own understandings and assumptions, which then reinforces those understandings for the next generation. Debates concerning which elements developed first or influenced the others remain much less important than the ways the stories and practices help each community to make sense of their experiences and their own identifications.

Imagery of Jhule Lal

Beyond the oral and printed representations of Jhule Lal, Sindhi Hindus often displayed posters and *murtis* of their regional deity. The most pervasive image of Jhule Lal depicts a royal figure, sitting in a lotus position on

a flower, riding on a fish (figure 4.1). The *murtis* in the Hari Om Mandir, the Shiv Shanti Ashram, the procession for Cheti Chand, and the Jhule Lal temple at Sindhi Ghat, as well as almost all of the paintings and published pictures of Jhule Lal, presented this basic image with only minor variations. While the typical verbal representations of Jhule Lal among Sindhi Hindus presented him as a Hindu deity related to Vishnu and / or Varuna, the specific elements in the predominant image of Jhule Lal connected to several different figures and traditions, revealing the complex heritage of Sindhi traditions.



Figure 4.1 Image of Jhule Lal with offerings during Cheti Chand, Lucknow, India, 2002. Photo by author

Several specific aspects of the iconography of Jhule Lal fit with the typical images of many Hindu deities. The royal symbols of a crown and a brocaded silk dhoti on this image of Jhule Lal are typical for the gods. The peacock feather in the crown specifically connects with the iconography of Krishna, while the *tilak* (sectarian mark on the forehead) is a Vaishnavite symbol, which is appropriate considering the common association of Jhule Lal with Vishnu. His seated position, the lotus on which he sat, and the fish from the Indus River that served as his *vahana* (animal vehicle) reinforced his position as a Hindu deity.

Another element in many paintings of Jhule Lal further emphasizes his Hindu identification. These images incorporate a North Indian style temple in the background, its tower topped with a saffron flag. With steps leading to a river, this image resembles descriptions of Sadh Bela, a temple on an island in the Indus River in northern Sindh that Sindhis often associate with Jhule Lal. Several versions of Jhule Lal's story connect one of his miracles with the location of that temple (*Indian Express* 2002a, 4; Hemnani n.d.). While the imagery, therefore, reminded some Sindhis of an important religious site in Sindh, the style of the shrine on the banks of the river certainly confirmed a Hindu identification to non-Sindhis in North India.

On the other hand, a variety of elements in Jhule Lal's iconography diverge from typical images of Hindu deities. While most male Hindu deities are bare-chested, as was common among kings in India, Jhule Lal consistently wore an opulent tunic, which is more commonly associated with Persianate courts and rulers.[1] The opulent tunic, therefore, identified Jhule Lal as a royal figure, just like the crown and other royal motifs in the images of Jhule Lal and many other deities. However, drawing on Persianate traditions of royal dress makes this aspect of Jhule Lal's iconography distinct among Hindu gods. Jhule Lal's full, white, neat beard also distinguished him from most Hindu deities who appeared clean-shaven and dark haired, with a few exceptions such as Visvakarman. The white hair and beard is common among images of Hindu ascetics, but most of these images emphasize their asceticism through elements such as unkempt hair and limited clothing that do not fit with the overall image of Jhule Lal.

Most of these anomalous elements, however, fit with common imagery of Khwaja Khizr. As an immortal, wise being, he is often depicted as a white bearded man, and in typical Islamic fashion, Khwaja Khizr is fully clothed, usually in a green cloak (Coomaraswamy 1989, 157–167). Furthermore, as images of Khwaja Khizr typically depict him standing on a fish, Jhule Lal's *vahana* contributes to the similarities, although his seated position on the fish pushes Jhule Lal's standard iconography toward

typical Hindu imagery and away from associations with Khwaja Khizr. One alternate image of Jhule Lal, which was used in a newspaper advertisement in Lucknow during Cheti Chand and in the celebration of Cheti Chand in Charlotte, North Carolina, depicts him standing on a fish in the river, which suggests more clearly an iconographic connection between the two figures (*Indian Express* 2002b, 4; Coomaraswamy 1989, 157). While overall the imagery suggests a connection between Khwaja Khizr and Jhule Lal, Jhule Lal's crown, opulent tunic, and seated position distinguish him from Khwaja Khizr and confirm Jhule Lal's position as a royal figure on another plain, or more simply as a deity, as opposed to Khwaja Khizr's enigmatic status as a saint or prophet. When Jhule Lal's tunic, crown, and beard are considered together, they place Jhule Lal at the intersection of several cultural idioms, much as the region of Sindh related to both West Asia and South Asia. Such an understanding makes Jhule Lal an apt image for Sindhi Hindus, even though many Sindhi Hindus emphasize his position in the Hindu pantheon exclusively.

In the context of North India, however, images of Khwaja Khizr were not common. In terms of the common images within the region, Jhule Lal most strikingly resembled contemporary iconography of Nanak. Jhule Lal's long, white beard is similar to the well-kept, white beard of Nanak. Even though Jhule Lal does not demonstrate other Sikh symbols, it was difficult to distinguish between the faces of the two figures with their beards and serene faces. Other elements, most notably the head covering and clothing, emphasized the distinctions between the royal opulence of Jhule Lal and the simplicity of Nanak with his plain robes and turban.

Occasionally, Sindhis depicted Jhule Lal differently, drawing on the story of him leading an army out of the Indus River. One image published in a newspaper ad during Cheti Chand also held particular symbolic associations in the context of North India. This image depicted Jhule Lal as a young man with his sword drawn, riding a horse out of the river (*Indian Express* 2002b, 1). While this image recalls Jhule Lal's martial leadership of an army against Mirkhshah, the drawn sword and Jhule Lal's dark beard resemble Gobind Singh, the tenth guru in the Sikh lineage, whom Sikhs typically depict as a young man who battled the Mughals during Aurangzeb's reign. This association of the image with Gobind Singh, therefore, reflects a common struggle against the tyrannical rule of certain Muslims, which Aurangzeb has come to symbolize in Hindu Nationalist rhetoric. Such a connection also correlates with the association of Jhule Lal's miracles with Aurangzeb's rule in a few Sindhi versions of the story.

The most distinguishing characteristic in most of Jhule Lal's images, however, are his hands. Most Hindu deities hold weapons or other

elements illustrating the accounts of their major victories or attributes, and Nanak typically presents a gesture of blessing with his right hand, reinforcing his position as a guru blessing his followers. In contrast, Jhule Lal usually holds an open book with both hands. I have encountered only one other deity, Brahma, holding a book, which is connected with the Vedas in that case. However, images of Brahma generally depict the text as a palm-leaf manuscript, not the decoratively bound volume that Jhule Lal holds. This decorative binding suggests a ritually honored volume such as the Guru Granth Sahib or the decoratively bound Qur'an, more than the treatment of primarily oral texts in practices commonly recognized as Hindu. Most surprisingly, unlike the connection of Brahma to the receipt of the Vedas, the stories of Jhule Lal that I have encountered never mention the book, and no one whom I interviewed explained what the book was. However, since most stories of Jhule Lal placed him before Nanak, holding the Guru Granth Sahib would be anachronistic, although the historical setting of the stories does not necessarily correspond to the period when the imagery developed. Holding a Qu'ran seems, at first glance, also incongruous, with the Sindhi Hindu narratives describing Jhule Lal defeating cruel Muslims. However, since some accounts suggest that Jhule Lal taught the Muslims the meaning of the Qur'an, the association of the text with the Qur'an remains plausible. The connection of Jhule Lal to Khwaja Khizr, a Qur'anic figure, enhances the potential of that explanation. This suggestion would also explain the insignificance of the book for Sindhi Hindus, since having their deity holding a Qur'an would not further their emphasis on their Hindu identification.

The various symbols depicted in images of Jhule Lal reinforce the complexity of his identification and the challenges that Sindhi Hindus faced. Although much of the imagery draws on Hindu symbols for deities, the tunic, white beard, and book raise the issue of his connection to Islamic and Sikh traditions. As these elements were more commonly associated with Sikhism and Islam for non-Sindhis, who were generally ignorant about the figure Jhule Lal, they contributed to the challenges that Sindhi Hindus faced as they represented themselves in diaspora. Nevertheless, such challenges did not lead Sindhis to abandon Jhule Lal or to change aspects of his images that raised these questions. Even the book in his hands, which seemed to carry little, if any, meaning for Sindhis, remained in most images. While Sindhis exhibited their ability to use the story of Jhule Lal to promote their ideological points, his imagery appeared to be less malleable, meaning that continuity with constructed traditions was more powerful in some situations than the agency to promote ideological arguments.

Nanak

For many Sindhi Hindus, Nanak holds a prominent place in their universe of sacred figures. In Lucknow, his image was central, as he blessed the community from the center of the mosaic behind the canopy at the Hari Om Mandir and was the central image in front of the main canopy and over the entranceway to the pavilion at the Shiv Shanti Ashram. Outside Lucknow, Nanak also remained important, with his *murti* in the line of *murtis* on the main floor of the Sindhu Sadan in Chennai and a framed image both in front of and behind the canopy at the Sindhu House in Singapore. One leader in Lucknow specifically characterized Nanak as being the first among the religious figures for the Sindhi community. R. D. Gurnani similarly emphasized the influence of Nanak, especially on the older generation of Sindhis, asserting, "Sindhis were more influenced by Guru Nanak and this Guru Granth Sahib.... All old people, even in India now, are following most of the religious days of Guru Nanak."

Despite the clear significance for Nanak, Sindhi Hindus told few stories about him, particularly in comparison to Jhule Lal. The infrequent recitation of stories about Nanak arose, at least in part, because of the diasporic situation. In North India, most non-Sindhis were much more familiar with Nanak than Jhule Lal, and with that knowledge came the common association of Nanak with Sikhism. Therefore, too much emphasis on Nanak could threaten the recognition of Sindhis as Hindus.

Because of the general association of Nanak with Sikhism, Sindhis had to work against the common understandings when they represented Nanak. The most basic understanding of Nanak among Sindhi Hindus was that Nanak identified as a Hindu, thus confirming the Hindu nature of Sikh elements and justifying their veneration of him and the Guru Granth Sahib within their Hindu practices. This assertion, and the Hindu identification of the nine successive gurus in the Sikh lineage, was central to the arguments of Ahuja at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, among others, that the claim that the Guru Granth Sahib is not Hindu is wrong. Their representations of Nanak, however, extended beyond these simple assertions of religious identification at birth.

In several different ways, various Sindhi Hindus referred to Nanak as being especially gifted in teaching about Hindu traditions. V. L. Advani, the prominent follower of Rochal Das in Lucknow suggested that the devotion to the Guru Granth Sahib, and the poetry of Nanak that it contains, arose because the language of this poetry was more accessible to Sindhi Hindus than the Sanskrit of classical Hindu texts. Another Sindhi even commented that Nanak was exceptional in making the Vedas understandable to everyday Sindhis.

Karan Bhagchandani, the author of the story of Jhule Lal published in the Hindi pamphlet in Lucknow, used a traditional story about Nanak in an interview with me to make a similar point. When Nanak visited Hardwar and saw people at the Ganges River raising water up to the sun as offerings, he entered the water and began throwing water in the opposite direction. When people stopped to ask him what he was doing, he explained that he was watering his Punjabi fields. They responded with laughter at his naiveté that he could send the water hundreds of kilometers away. Then Nanak responded that if his water could not reach the Punjab, how could their water reach the sun? Bhagchandani interpreted this anecdote as teaching the importance of understanding the ritualized actions that a person performs. Therefore, Nanak did not teach people to abandon such Hindu traditions; he taught them to understand the deeper meanings of those actions. In this interpretation, Nanak becomes a reformer within Hindu traditions.

In contrast to the stories for Jhule Lal that were strikingly different between Hindu and Muslim tellings, Khalsa Sikhs frequently tell the same story about Nanak. However, they generally frame it differently. When Ranbir Singh tells this story, for example, he highlights the participation of the priests, who explain that they are providing water to their ancestors "in the Region of Sun" (Ranbir Singh 1965, 93). Singh frames this story by contrasting Nanak's ideas with the emptiness of Hindu traditions, which the priests represent. Singh writes, "Nanak discarded rotten traditions, fought against ignorance and superstitions, and showed new paths. So often, he came in conflict with orthodox opinions" (Ranbir Singh 1965, 92). This phrasing equates "orthodox opinions" with "rotten traditions" and "ignorance and superstitions," thus creating a fairly strong critique of the priests and Hinduism more generally. When these implications are placed in the context of his larger work, where he declares, "Sikhism is a sovereign religion. It is a new, original, and direct revelation" (Ranbir Singh 1965, 14), it becomes clear that the phrase "new paths" does not refer to a reformation or restoration of an existing tradition but identifies the creation of a separate, and clearly superior, religion. While the story is the same, Khalsa Sikhs and Sindhis use it to support their opposing ideological positions by inserting their own interpretation into the telling, reflecting the ideological assertions within the contested stories about Jhule Lal.

In contrast to the varied interpretations of the same stories, some Sindhi Hindu assertions about Nanak connect him directly to traditions commonly identified as Hindu. Several leaders of the *satsangs* at the Hari Om Mandir declared him an *avatar* of Vishnu. Since other Hindus have incorporated Buddhist traditions into Hinduism by naming the Buddha as one of Vishnu's ten appearances on earth, assertions such as this were not

entirely novel. This assertion also created the relation between Jhule Lal and Nanak discussed earlier. Several leaders even used this connection to justify the storage of Nanak's small image in Jhule Lal's shrine at the Hari Om Mandir. Connecting these two central Sindhi figures to each other through a major deity, generally recognized as Hindu, created an impression of a unified Sindhi tradition that fit comfortably within the boundaries of Hinduism, as long as people understood these figures properly.

The emphasis on Nanak's Hindu identification is not a timeless aspect of Sindhi Hindu thought. T. L. Vaswani, the founder of the Sadhu Vaswani movement, presents a different image of Nanak in his extensive writings on Nanak. Vaswani seems less concerned with justifying the Hindu identification of Nanak. He appreciated Nanak because he loved both Hindus and Muslims and worked against the divisions of creed, caste, and race (T. L. Vaswani n.d.a, 15, 18). Therefore, in a manner similar to the portrayal of Kanwar Ram in the biography by Punshi, Nanak is a sacred figure beyond the communal boundaries. Vaswani further identified Nanak as a *fakir,* a term that he also used for Muslim and Buddhist figures.

Although it is possible that these different interpretations of Nanak as beyond religious boundaries or an *avatar* of Vishnu reflect the personal interests or assertions of these Sindhis, the differences also correlate to the changes in the diasporic context. Since Vaswani died well before the heightened tensions between Sikhs and Hindus pushed Sindhi communities to alter their practices, as happened at the Hari Om Mandir and with the Sindhis who were excluded from the *gurdwara* in Hong Kong, Vaswani was not involved in the same ideological arguments about the relation of Sikh and Hindu traditions. While those debates were not new to the 1980s, they have become especially pertinent to Sindhi Hindus since then.

Balancing Jhule Lal and Nanak

Comparing Sindhi Hindu representations of Jhule Lal and Nanak highlights the multifaceted dynamics affecting Sindhi Hindu traditions in diaspora. Sindhi Hindus generally used stories to distinguish their understanding of both these figures from the understandings of other communities, but these stories distinguished Sindhi Hindu understandings in very different ways. While the stories of Jhule Lal that Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Muslims generally presented had common elements, such as the importance of water and the physical salvation that Jhule Lal miraculously provided, the characters and plot differed considerably. For both communities, Jhule Lal illustrated their superiority over lecherous / fanatical

members of the opposing community. This stark difference reflected the tensions that frequently affected Muslim and Hindu identifications and the concern of each community to define Jhule Lal as a figure that clearly fits into their definition of their traditions.

In contrast, Sindhi Hindus and Khalsa Sikhs told similar stories about Nanak but framed the stories differently. Each community interpreted particular details in ways that supported their unique ideological interests. Although significant tension existed between the interpretation of Sikhism as a subgroup of Hinduism or as a separate religion, the historical connections between the communities facilitated the use of the same stories. These historical connections also bolstered Sindhi Hindu arguments that Sikh traditions are ultimately Hindu.

Sindhi Hindu efforts to use stories of sacred figures to support their ideological needs were certainly not unique to them, as most communities do this to some extent. For example, leaders at a Muslim site in Hyderabad, in South India, which Joyce Fleuckiger has detailed, clearly framed aspects of stories during their narrative performances to emphasize the commonalities between different religious traditions, which supported the healing practices that attracted Hindus, Muslims, and Christians (2006, 183–194). This agenda illustrates another ideological point that Sindhis clearly avoided in their presentations of Nanak and Jhule Lal. Instead of emphasizing commonalities, most of the Sindhi representations of Jhule Lal and Nanak accentuated primarily the Hindu identification of their traditions and the superiority of Hindu and Sindhi traditions over others, which highlights the particular Sindhi concern for legitimacy as Hindus in their diasporic context.

This concern with the recognition of their Hindu identification correlated with the prominence of the stories of these figures, as Sindhi Hindus generally spent more time telling stories of Jhule Lal than Nanak, both in interviews with me and in published accounts, even though devotion to Nanak was central for many of them. As their stories about Jhule Lal typically constructed a clearly Hindu image, these stories supported their concern to bolster their acceptance as Hindus, while any emphasis on Nanak had the opposite effect, frequently raising doubts about the Hindu identification of Sindhis because the people of North India already associated Nanak with a Khalsa Sikh identification.

These concerns led to another imbalance in their representations of Nanak and Jhule Lal. While several Sindhis stressed a connection between Nanak and Jhule Lal, that connection functioned in one direction, associating Nanak with Jhule Lal, but not vice versa. Discussions of Jhule Lal seldom mentioned Nanak, yet some discussions of Nanak connected him explicitly with Jhule Lal. Since Jhule Lal came to signify their unique

regional heritage, connecting him to Nanak would undermine their assertion of their Hindu identification because of the dominant definition of Nanak as Sikh. Making the association in the other direction, however, served to resignify Nanak as a figure associated with Hindu deities. Similarly, relating Nanak and Jhule Lal as two *avatars* of Vishnu subverted the association of Nanak exclusively with Sikhism, by describing him as a Hindu deity. This imbalance in the relationship and representations of Jhule Lal and Nanak becomes even clearer in the celebrations of their birthdays in Lucknow, which I discuss in the next chapter.

The ability to present sacred figures in a particular way, however, faces another complex facet of agency, as neither the community that claims the sacred figures nor the visual artists and storytellers who create the images can control everyone's interpretation. While I have emphasized the general understandings in the Sindhi community, individuals interpret these figures according to their own experiences and ideological needs at the moment, even when one understanding and story becomes dominant within a community. This process of interpretation made the experience of diaspora even more difficult for Sindhis, as both Sindhis and non-Sindhis easily developed associations for these sacred figures that differed from the dominant Sindhi understandings. Related to this dynamic, the concern for maintaining Sindhi traditions highlighted the need to teach Sindhi children who Jhule Lal and Nanak were, so that the next generation would maintain Sindhi understandings and not be absorbed into the broader society. Without that cultural education, the next generation might not recognize Jhule Lal, for example, as a Hindu deity because his clothing does not match that of the typical Hindu deities. This challenge added to the interest in the community to represent these figures clearly in both community events and public celebrations, which happened most directly on the birthdays of Nanak and Jhule Lal.

Chapter 5

Celebrating Heritage

Saffron banners and bunting signifying the celebration of Cheti Chand arched over the narrow streets of Aminabad, one of the oldest markets of Lucknow, which was packed with shoppers on a mid-April Saturday afternoon. While I waited for the procession in an open-air shop, a musician from the Hari Om Mandir arrived in an autorickshaw and explained the significance of Cheti Chand and Jhule Lal through a loudspeaker attached to his vehicle. A few moments after he had sped ahead to the next intersection, I saw, around the curve of the street, a saffron banner bobbing up and down as two men carried it. Between two line drawings of Jhule Lal, large black letters announced in Hindi "*Jhūle lāl mahotsav*" (Grand Festival for Jhule Lal).

Four hours earlier, the procession had started at the Shiv Shanti Ashram on the south side of the city, with this banner leading five trucks, each displaying images of the gurus in Chandu Ram's lineage or tableaus depicting scenes such as Jhule Lal on a white horse flanked by his soldiers. Since then, the procession had swelled, with the addition of an elephant, three men riding horses who were dressed as Jhule Lal and other characters from his story, and a marching band in white and red uniforms, which most frequently performed in wedding processions. Beyond these additions, thirteen bicycle rickshaws carried paintings of Jhule Lal and Sindhi gurus, including T. L. Vaswani, as well as tableaus with children dressed as Shiva, Radha-Krishna, and Durga. Seventeen additional trucks had joined the original five and brought up the rear of the procession, some carrying displays depicting gurus in saffron robes and deities such as Vishnu, Durga, and of course Jhule Lal. Others carried a *murti* of Jhule Lal, with a *bharana* (a tray of offerings, usually including a dough lamp) placed in front of

him (figure 4.1), and groups of devotees headed to the river for the main celebration.

At the center of the procession, several men pushed a canopied cart decorated with yellow bunting and numerous strands of marigolds. Inside the cart, traditional offerings for Cheti Chand, including grains, fruits, and oil lamps made from flour and water, surrounded a garlanded painting of Jhule Lal. Some devotees in the crowd took *darshan* of this image, waved their hand over the lamp, and received *prasad,* while a few presented offerings of a coconut.

Throughout the procession, as it weaved through the center of Lucknow, Sindhis walked the route, interacting with non-Sindhi bystanders. Devotees distributed small bags of snacks as *prasad* and responded to questions about the procession that many bystanders asked. Several vegetable vendors in the neighborhoods offered the elephant cabbages and white radishes, while some non-Sindhis in the bustling markets hardly glanced at the procession as it passed.

Other Sindhis in the procession performed in various ways. Young men from the Shiv Shanti Ashram, wearing matching turmeric-dyed *kurtas* (knee-length shirts), played drums and danced jovially, hitting their sticks together faster and faster in a traditional Sindhi dance. Another youth who was fabulously dressed as the deity Hanuman, including a monkey face and tail, joked with both those in the procession and bystanders. As the procession reached a major intersection, which Sindhi merchants in the area had decorated with white lights, each element in the procession stopped to receive refreshments and to perform for the larger crowd, keeping the normally congested intersection at a complete standstill. The next day, one newspaper reported on the three-hour traffic jam that ensued (*Hindustān* 2002a, 6). Because of the heat in Lucknow in mid-April, organizers provided refreshment stands along the procession route for participants and the public, serving items such as cool drinks, a traditional Sindhi spinach dish, chickpeas, and chai.

As the procession approached the river, I came across a curious trio walking arm in arm. One man wore a white robe, gathered at the waist, and a straw hat with henna dyeing his beard orange; another was in a black robe, buttoned at the front, and a black, round cap with a trimmed, full beard. The third man wore a white *kurta,* with a *tilak* on his forehead and a turmeric-dyed shawl decorated with Sanskrit phrases over his shoulders. Only when I noticed the crucifix dangling on the necklace of the first man did I realize that the trio represented a Christian, a Muslim, and a Hindu. Their jovial presence symbolized the religious harmony of Sindh. Immediately before the procession entered the riverside park for the evening's *mela,* a Sindhi singer took the microphone from the leader

of the marching band and began singing "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar*." He particularly emphasized its refrain of "*Jhūle Lāl*," as each part of the procession made its way down the hill to the flood plain where the *mela* for Cheti Chand was starting.

Major Sindhi Festivals

Within the Sindhi Hindu community in Lucknow, Cheti Chand was one of the biggest holidays of the year, rivaled only by Nanak Jayanti. The procession for Cheti Chand was only one component of two days of activities honoring Jhule Lal. The activities on the first day also included the celebration of the birthday of two saints that happened to fall on Cheti Chand, a mass *upanayan*, and a cultural/religious program at Lakshman Mela Park on the banks of the Gomti River. The second day included an expanded weekly *satsang* and *langar* at the Hari Om Mandir, which also included the veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib, and a smaller *mela* at Sindhi Ghat.

Although Nanak Jayanti involved less of a public celebration than the procession for Cheti Chand, Sindhi Hindus commemorated it with a full week of special *satsangs* and events held inside both the Hari Om Mandir and the Shiv Shanti Ashram. Although Cheti Chand prominently highlighted deities and Sindhi gurus, Nanak Jayanti clearly enacted Sindhi understandings of the relation of Nanak to Hindu traditions in several ways. Although Nanak Jayanti took place within the confines of the community's institutions, it was also fully public as the community announced several events in the newspapers and invited dignitaries to participate. These announcements, in fact, assumed a Sindhi Hindu understanding as most of them highlighted both the devotion to Nanak and other ritualized activities that fit the dominant definitions of Hinduism.

As with the various stories and images of Jhule Lal and Nanak that Sindhi Hindus emphasized, they made a variety of choices about how to commemorate the birthdays of these two figures. One aspect of their selection, especially in events such as the procession for Cheti Chand that moved beyond the confines of Sindhi Hindu spaces, was a consideration of the image and message that they wanted to present to the broader society. Many of these selections enacted aspects of their representations of these two figures, although on some occasions their practices diverged from their general representations.

Analyzing the various commemorations of these events in Lucknow and elsewhere illustrates further their formation of their traditions and

their different representations in their diasporic homes. These celebrations also reveal the different roles that Jhule Lal and Nanak played within community self-understandings and representations. As these events became significant for the maintenance of a Sindhi Hindu heritage in diaspora, they are vital for understanding the experiences and challenges that these communities faced.

Cheti Chand in Full Public View

In Lucknow, with different processions converging at a park on the banks of the Gomti River, Cheti Chand became the most public representation of Sindhi Hindus to the broader society. These processions for Cheti Chand, such as the central procession described at the beginning of this chapter, emphasized the Hindu identification of the community to the people who were present in various densely populated parts of the city. The procession of a sacred object through the streets is a common religious practice in Lucknow, often marking the territory of a particular sacred power and / or moving to a climax with the burial or immersion of the object. In the context of Lucknow, the central cart for Cheti Chand clearly demonstrated a Hindu identification as it contained a *murti* of Jhule Lal, not a Guru Granth Sahib or a replica of a tomb, which Shia Muslims carry during Muharram.

From the saffron banner at the start to the deity on the last truck, the other elements in the processions also created an image of Sindhi traditions that non-Sindhis typically recognized as Hindu. Both the explanation of the story of Jhule Lal from the autorickshaw and the lead banner in Hindi, which identified the festival in terms commonly associated with the festivals of Hindu deities, not the Sindhi name of the festival, confirmed the interest of the organizers to present the festival to non-Sindhis who would not be familiar with Cheti Chand. The effectiveness of the audio explanation, however, was questionable, as the din of the market made it difficult to understand the statement over a tinny loudspeaker. Beyond the verbal representations, the tableaus of gurus wearing saffron robes, the turmeric-dyed *kurtas* of the ashram youth, the offerings presented to the image of Jhule Lal, and the *prasad* that they distributed all fit within the common definition of the borders of Hinduism.

What was absent from this public image, however, was as significant as what was present. Sindhis clearly highlighted only the elements of their heritage that emphasized a Hindu identification. Despite the centrality of Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib in the self-understandings of many

Sindhi Hindus and their institutions in Lucknow, neither element appeared explicitly in the procession of images. Though they included images of Vaswani, Kanwar Ram, Teoonram, and several other Sindhi figures who fit common images of Hindu gurus, no one inserted an image of Nanak. Similarly, I observed the distribution of several types of food as *prasad,* but none was the *kara prasad* typically connected to the Guru Granth Sahib at the Hari Om Mandir. Such exclusions reflected the absence of Nanak in the verbal representations of Jhule Lal, presumably because Nanak would disrupt the identification of Jhule Lal with Hinduism.

Perhaps most significantly, the absence of a Khalsa Sikh in the trio representing religious harmony clearly emphasized a Sindhi Hindu cultural assertion, which excluded Sikhs because Sikhs are really Hindus. This exclusion was particularly notable in North India, where the three major religions that have experienced serious conflict since Partition are Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. With the exclusion of the Sikhs, the image of harmony that these three figures represented appeared to express their idealized image of pre-Partition Sindh more than a prescription for what they wanted to occur in their contemporary diasporic context.

In these processions, Sindhi Hindus again demonstrated their agency to represent their traditions according to their own understandings. As different organizations and groups of Sindhis created their own tableaus and images to add to the processions, no single person or committee controlled the processions completely. My impression was that no central dictate prohibited images of Nanak or the Guru Granth Sahib, though some of the organizers may have discouraged such images informally. Since the historical context for the story of Jhule Lal supposedly predates the time of Nanak, neither Nanak nor the Guru Granth Sahib were necessary for their representations of Jhule Lal. Therefore, the exclusion of Nanak may reflect the elements that Sindhi Hindus focus on during this particular celebration. However, the inclusion of many Sindhi gurus who lived in the twentieth century suggests that, although Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib were central in the two main institutions in Lucknow, the relationship of Sindhi Hindus to these elements that people commonly connected with Punjab, not Sindh, had its limits. When Sindhi Hindus represented Sindhi culture to the broader community, Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib were not automatically present.

Despite the clarity of this representation of their Hindu identification, certain components of Cheti Chand also demonstrated subtly the complex relationship of Sindhis to traditions commonly defined as outside the boundaries of Hinduism. Certain aspects of the traditions surrounding Jhule Lal, as I argued in chapter 4, reflected elements typically associated with Nanak and with Islamicate royal attire, so the images of Jhule Lal

maintained a certain ambiguity about their religious identifications for those non-Sindhis who were unfamiliar with him. For example, few non-Sindhis would have recognized the song "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar*" as a *bhajan* to Jhule Lal when it was sung near the end of the procession. In fact, many non-Sindhi Muslims and Hindus would associate its references to *qalandar* with Islamic traditions. One tableau in the procession particularly connected with Islamic elements in the context of Lucknow. With Jhule Lal on a white horse, surrounded by warriors with swords, this tableau resembled aspects of representations of Imam Hussein at the battle of Karbala, when he was martyred. Considering the importance of Muharram in the history and practices of Lucknow, many bystanders may have associated the image of a royal figure, wearing a tunic, on a white horse with Imam Hussein. However, the tenor of the procession, as a celebration of the victory of Jhule Lal, certainly differed from the Shi'a commemorations of the tragedy of Karbala that appeared in Lucknow during Muharram.

Although Sindhis created the images in the procession with at least some concern for representing Sindhi heritage to non-Sindhis, they could not control how non-Sindhis perceived the images. The various ambiguities in the imagery meant that people in Lucknow who operated with non-Sindhi sensibilities could easily associate these images with Sikh and Islamic traditions, thus undermining the community's self-representation as Hindu. Nevertheless, placing an image of a deity in the center of the procession clearly distinguished the procession from Khalsa Sikh activities and mainstream Islam, both of which rejected images of deities. Therefore, the event emphasized a clearly Hindu identification while possibly creating confusion among non-Sindhis who did not understand religious boundaries in the ways that Sindhi Hindus did.

Cheti Chand Mela

The final destination for all the processions was the Lakshman Mela Park along the Gomti River, which served as a location for many religious and nonreligious festivals, including the burning of the demon-king Ravana for Dussehra. For Cheti Chand, an enclosure within the park, which could seat approximately 2,000 people, included a stage, an exhibit on Sindhi history and culture, and a variety of booths with food, books, and goods for sale. When the main procession arrived, the musical performances, primarily consisting of devotional songs to Jhule Lal and other deities, had already begun.

Organizers had created a large display next to the stage that illustrated one conception of the festival. The display depicted a river, in the form of

pink-colored water, flowing from the top of the snow-clad Himalayas to the ground. In the context of the Sindhi celebration, the river obviously symbolized the Indus River, though non-Sindhis could have just as easily mistaken it for the Ganges. A *murti* of Jhule Lal sat at the source of the Indus at the top of the display. In contrast to the repeated connection of Jhule Lal with Vishnu, this placement of Jhule Lal reflected the image of Shiva with the Ganges flowing out of his hair, which again reinforced Jhule Lal's inclusion among the common Hindu deities. Other *murtis,* including Durga and Shiva, held lower places in the display, while Ganesh sat at the foot of the river. Besides associating Jhule Lal with other Hindu deities, the display held an implicit evaluation, with Jhule Lal clearly superior to the other figures.

Just beyond this large display, a canopied shrine contained an image of Jhule Lal. Several older men carried the largest *murti* of Jhule Lal from the procession to add to this shrine, and they stationed the central cart containing the painting of Jhule Lal beside the shrine. As several other smaller processions arrived from other parts of Lucknow, they also brought images of Jhule Lal to add to the shrine. As in the main procession, I found no images of Nanak or the Guru Granth Sahib in any of the displays or processions.

Next to the shrine, an opening in the cloth and bamboo enclosure of the *mela* grounds led to the riverbank. In this unlit area, devotees, primarily women, brought the *bharana* with the traditional offerings of fruits, grains, and dough lamps to be placed in the river. Several costumed participants in the procession, including Jhule Lal and the trio representing religious harmony, rowed out to the middle of the river in a pair of boats to immerse some of the offerings that had been in the main procession.

Immersing offerings in the river further reinforced the Hindu identification of the festival, as the immersion of sacred objects was common among Hindus in Lucknow. For example, during Durga Puja many groups immersed their *murtis* of Durga in the river. This action contrasted with the burial of the replicas of the tomb of Hussein at the conclusion of Muharram in Lucknow. Various Sindhis related the immersion of offerings, instead of *murtis,* to traditional practices in Sindh, and explained that the offerings served to nourish the fish in the river in honor of the water deity who rode on a fish. However, since few non-Sindhis attended the *mela,* let alone realized what transpired in this unlit area, this reinforcement of the Hindu identification had little impact on the ambiguities in the public aspects of Cheti Chand.

Although rivers hold significance for most Hindus, the Gomti River was not especially sacred like the Ganges. However, for the Sindhis, this local river took on the symbolic position of the Indus River in Sindh, as

Sindhis connected placing offerings in the Gomti with similar activities at Sadh Bela and other sites on the banks of the Indus. In this sense, elements of the context of Lucknow took on an added symbolic significance because of the diaspora of the Sindhis. The actions of kneeling by the river and pouring offerings into it further placed the devotee bodily in a subordinate position to the river, which therefore strengthened the symbolic correspondence of the Gomti to the Indus. Because of these associations and ritualized actions, some Sindhis probably considered the Gomti more sacred that many long-term residents of Lucknow did.

Although all the seats at the *mela* were not full, more than a thousand people came for the varied elements of the *mela.* After placing offerings in the river, many ate at the food stalls, enjoyed the children's carnival rides, browsed the vendors selling Sindhi tapes, pictures of Sindhi gurus, and even small appliances, and watched the performances on the stage that included some popular local Sindhi musicians. The bright lights in the park and periodic fireworks that punctuated the night attracted the attention of some non-Sindhis as well as the Sindhi participants.

Sindhi Ghat

On the second day of Cheti Chand celebrations in Lucknow, another smaller public *mela* occurred at Sindhi Ghat, the area of shrines that Sindhis had built along the Gomti River. Before 2002, this area had been the regular venue for the Cheti Chand *mela.* However, the crowds had become so big that organizers shifted the activities to the larger Lakshman Mela Park. As some Sindhis opposed the change, they organized this second *mela* to respond to the various interests in the larger Sindhi Hindu community.

A few hundred devotees, mostly Sindhis, participated at Sindhi Ghat on this day. Devotees generally ignored the shrines on the upper and lower levels of Sindhi Ghat, except for the Jhule Lal shrine, which organizers had decorated with multiple garlands of flowers. Even before the organized activities began, some individual Sindhis and family groups came to kneel at the steps entering the river and immerse the *bharana* that they had brought from home or from the Hari Om Mandir that morning. Several people physically expressed their submission by carrying the *bharana* on their heads. As at the previous night's *mela,* most of those who immersed the offerings were women, often acting as representatives of their entire family.

Besides decorating the existing Jhule Lal shrine, organizers used a pavilion close to the river to create a temporary shrine, with a *murti* of Jhule Lal

from the Hari Om Mandir as its focal point. This temporary shrine became the center of devotion for the organized activities. Volunteers accepted people's offerings of coconuts and other fruits and returned *prasad* to the devotees, while a few participants ignored the organized activities, bypassing the temporary shrine to pour their offerings directly into the river.

Along with the rhythm of the hammer cracking coconuts as people presented them at the temporary shrine, various groups of musicians performed on a *divan* along the edge of the river. As they sang devotional songs for the occasion, other devotees sat on the steps between the upper and lower levels. The setting was less formal than the previous night, which had a larger stage that separated the musicians from the audience. At Sindhi Ghat, people interacted more closely with the musicians, including taking their infants to the *divan* for the musicians to bless them on this auspicious occasion.

As with the other public parts of Cheti Chand, the events at Sindhi Ghat clearly expressed a Hindu identification. The offerings to the river, the images arranged in the temporary shrine, and much of the devotional music drew on elements typically associated with Hindu traditions. As a public site connected with Sindhis, this location itself emphasized their Hindu identification with its variety of *mandirs,* the peepul tree with small *murtis* surrounding it, and the access to the river. It also served as a source of pride as a public site created by Sindhis that attracted many non-Sindhis, much more than the other Sindhi institutions in Lucknow. Perhaps this pride and connection to the history of devotions here fueled the opposition to the change in the location of Cheti Chand that resulted in this second public expression of Sindhi devotions to their river deity.

Cheti Chand within Sindhi Institutions

The commemoration of Cheti Chand at the Hari Om Mandir and the Shiv Shanti Ashram created a different image, enacting more clearly the Sindhi Hindu understandings rather than the typical definitions of Hinduism that dominated the public events. At both institutions, the veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib remained a part of the expanded activities. Although the inclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib on these occasions reflected the typical ritualized activities for each institution, their continuation of the standard format on a special occasion was not automatic, since the special *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir during Durga Puja specifically ignored the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Therefore, some leaders made a

conscious choice to include the Guru Granth Sahib when celebrating Cheti Chand inside their institutions, which further highlights the significance of the exclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak when they performed their devotions to Jhule Lal outside these institutions.

Cheti Chand at the Shiv Shanti Ashram

At the Shiv Shanti Ashram, Cheti Chand began with a flurry of activities, though not all of them were directed toward Jhule Lal. In 2002, his birthday coincided with the birthday of Kanwar Ram, one of the gurus of Asuda Ram, and Teoonram, another Sindhi guru whose text, the Prem Prakash Granth, rested in the second canopy at the ashram. The morning activities at the ashram focused on the commemoration of Kanwar Ram, along with recognition for Teoonram. The morning *satsang,* which was unusually crowded, included typical recitations, prayers, and *bhajans* that incorporated the dual foci of the ashram. The primary change was that organizers had placed paintings of Kanwar Ram and Teoonram on a table on the main floor near the two shrines. Devotees gave obeisance to these images during the *satsang,* along with their respects to Chandu Ram, the Guru Granth Sahib, and the shrine to Chandu Ram's lineage.

The celebration of Kanwar Ram's birth held a public component. Chandu Ram and other leaders at the ashram garlanded a statue of Kanwar Ram that stands in a central intersection a mile or two from the ashram. Other volunteers from the ashram set up large pots of food near the statue to distribute *prasad* to everyone, thus expressing their devotion to their guru's lineage publicly in a manner that many people recognized as appropriate within Hindu traditions.

This public commemoration continued with a small procession that headed back to the ashram. A group of men from the ashram, including Chandu Ram and his sons, walked down the street, with a decorated cart displaying an image of Asuda Ram. Musicians played the *shahnai* (a traditional, double-reed instrument) and drums while a Sindhi performer sang, using speakers to amplify the music. Approximately a hundred females walked single file behind this group of men, carrying yellow water pots on their heads. Another group of men, many wearing turmeric-colored *kurtas*, the same as those in the central Cheti Chand procession, directed traffic on the busy road to keep the procession moving safely. The symbols and imagery of this public procession, with the water pots, turmeric-colored *kurtas,* garlands of marigolds decorating the guru's picture, and the music, corresponded to the prominent definitions of Hindu practices in Lucknow.

While these public ritualized activities were moving forward, I returned to the ashram to observe the preparation for two other events. In the pavilion near the stage, volunteers decorated several trucks for the central Cheti Chand procession that began later that afternoon from the ashram. While a group of young men joked with each other as they fixed their costumes for the tableaus they would create in the procession, a group of Sindhi families prepared to conduct a *havan* in the back portion of the pavilion for the mass ceremony in which seventeen boys received their sacred thread. Explaining the centrality of the *upanayan*, one of the ashram's volunteers asserted that the sacred thread was something "all Hindus must wear for the rest of their life." Therefore, the charitable act of providing the ceremony for poorer Sindhi families reflected the ashram's support for a Hindu identification.

By the time the water pot procession reached the ashram, the *upanayan* had already started. The men leading the procession took Asuda Ram's cart into the pavilion, where people approached it and took the smoke from the burning lamp to their face. Chandu Ram also entered the pavilion and approached the *divan* to bless the families who were participating in the *upanayan*. After blessing them, he quickly returned to the *satsang* hall, where the women with the water pots were waiting, to continue the ritualized conclusion of that procession. The priests proceeded with the *havan* that Chandu Ram had interrupted, directing the families to repeat each Sanskrit *sloka* (verse) and place designated items into their respective fires.

Both the water pot procession and the *upanayan* clearly fit within the dominant Hindu understanding. Water pots feature prominently in the consecration and regular bathing of *murtis,* and the Sanskrit *sloka*, *havan*, and *upanayan* are traditionally defined as Hindu. As with other events at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, Chandu Ram's preeminence as the community's guru was clear as he inserted himself into events, such as the *upanayan*, that did not require his presence according to traditional understandings.

While both the *upanayan* in the pavilion and the blessing of the water pots in the *satsang* continued, the time for the procession for Cheti Chand approached. In preparation, the youth who were going to form the living tableaus entered the *satsang* hall to receive the blessings of both the foci of the ashram. They circumambulated the Guru Granth Sahibs in the main shrine, each one touching the books as he passed, and then they paid their respects to the images of the gurus in Chandu Ram's lineage in the smaller shrine. After completing those rounds, each youth stood before Chandu Ram and received his blessing. Only then did they move outside to take their places on the decorated trucks. Therefore, when away from the public streets, the foundational role of both the Guru Granth Sahib and Chandu

Ram's lineage remained clear, although only the images of Chandu Ram's lineage appeared publicly in the procession.

After a short time, Chandu Ram led a group of men out of the ashram. One man carried a coconut on his head, and another carried a *bharana* that held a small *murti* of Jhule Lal and the traditional offerings for Cheti Chand. Chandu Ram blessed the items, and the men placed them on the back of a truck that displayed a large image of Asuda Ram. The trucks then lined up for the procession to start. As the staging proceeded, some of the women began to leave the ashram, carrying the water pots as they walked home. The *upanayan* continued in the pavilion as the procession departed.

The events of the morning highlighted elements generally recognized as Hindu, with the veneration of Hindu gurus, distribution of *prasad,* a water pot procession, and an *upanayan.* Amid these elements was the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib. In addition to the regular role of the Guru Granth Sahib during the early morning *satsang,* the Guru Granth Sahib also anchored both processions, as the water pot procession returned to the *satsang* hall and the youth who created the tableau for the Cheti Chand procession touched the Guru Granth Sahib before they received Chandu Ram's blessings. However, on a day when the community performed multiple processions in the streets of Lucknow, the Guru Granth Sahib and their obeisance to it remained within the confines of the ashram.

Cheti Chand at the Hari Om Mandir

The morning after the processions and large *mela,* the regular Sunday morning *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir shifted its focus to Jhule Lal, while still maintaining some respect for the Guru Granth Sahib. When I arrived, the partitions dividing the *satsang* hall and the auditorium were open, and devotees sat on the floor of the auditorium encircling a tulsi plant, which was surrounded by burning *diyas* (small oil lamps). Many families had both a water pot and a *bharana,* such as those in the procession the day before, in front of them containing traditional offerings for Cheti Chand and a small *murti* of Jhule Lal.

After Sona Gurnani, one of the leaders at the institution, completed the recitations that consecrated each *bharana*, members from each family placed the tray of offerings and the water pot on their heads and processed across the *satsang* hall to the front courtyard, where each person briefly entered the exterior Jhule Lal shrine. When they exited the shrine, still carrying the *bharana* on their heads, they returned to the *satsang* hall to place the trays and waterpots in front of the interior Jhule Lal shrine.

Throughout this short procession, other devotees touched the trays to receive the blessings and add their own devotions to the offerings.

With the special emphasis on Jhule Lal, the focus of the ritualized activities differed from those on a typical Sunday. After placing the offerings before Jhule Lal, they sang "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare*" and performed *arti*, but devotees only waved one lamp before the shrine of Jhule Lal instead of waving separate lamps before each deity shrine and the central canopy. As most devotees faced the Jhule Lal shrine on the right side of the hall, they physically demonstrated the shift of the community's focus away from the Guru Granth Sahib. However, the central canopy was not completely ignored. A few people paid respects to the granths by waving the flywhisks over them. After *arti,* the community proceeded with the standard Ardas and the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, although the reading of the Bhagavad Gita was eliminated. Unlike the typical Sunday when devotees were particularly attentive to Ardas, the larger crowd, especially those who sat in the adjoining auditorium, paid little attention to the proceedings surrounding the Guru Granth Sahib. After the reading, two guest musicians sang devotional songs, repeatedly inserting "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar*" to the delight of the devotees. At the conclusion of the *satsang,* the families who presented the trays and water pots took their consecrated offerings with them, to immerse in the river later that evening. Further confirming the focus on Jhule Lal, several families conducted their own devotions at the exterior Jhule Lal shrine during the *satsang,* never entering the *satsang* hall to give respect to the Guru Granth Sahib. After the *satsang,* some of the participants went upstairs to another open room and sat in lines on the floor for *langar,* which followed the general format of Sikh *gurdwaras.*

During the events at the Hari Om Mandir, the shift of the regular activities toward Jhule Lal did not result in the elimination of respect for the Guru Granth Sahib. Despite the increased emphasis on Hindu elements, as the prominent understandings in Lucknow defined them, during Cheti Chand, the organizers chose to eliminate the reading of the Bhagavad Gita from this *satsang,* while they kept the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib. Clearly, the Guru Granth Sahib held such an important position in the community, as at the Shiv Shanti Ashram, that they did not completely ignore it. Conducting a full *langar* according to Punjabi Sikh traditions further differentiated the celebrations from a traditional Hindu event, as the arrangement reflected the emphasis of Nanak on removing distinctions between people in dining. Therefore, these choices confirmed the influence of Nanak's teachings and the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib on an occasion emphasizing a deity whose stories have no direct connection with Nanak or the Guru Granth Sahib. Clearly, the emphases within both institutions differed from the images presented in the more public events.

Representations of Cheti Chand

The multiple accounts of Cheti Chand in various English and Hindi newspapers in Lucknow highlighted the Hindu nature of these festivities. However, the assumptions of the news reporters and the variety of representations from Sindhi leaders that went into the reporting incorporated some of the ambiguity of Sindhi activities and the difficulties that Sindhis faced in representing their traditions to the larger community. On the day of Cheti Chand, the Lucknow edition of the *Indian Express* presented a lengthy article, detailing one version of the story of Jhule Lal, which was surrounded by advertisements from local Sindhi businesses. Many of these advertisements included an image of Jhule Lal, which held the ambiguities of his dress and facial images discussed earlier (*Indian Express* 2002b, 1, 4). Clearly, someone organized Sindhi businesspeople to create a substantial presence in that newspaper.

Smaller announcements of the events of Cheti Chand appeared in other newspapers, though none had the multi-page presence of advertisements in the *Indian Express*. The *Sindhī Samāj* articles in the *Hindustān* discussed Cheti Chand numerous times. The first reference came on February 5, 2002, announcing the meeting of the organizing committee that decided to change the venue to Lakshman Mela Park (2002a, 4). From April 3 through April 13, seven articles announced the festivities on Cheti Chand, primarily focusing on the procession and *mela*. Most of these gave little explanation of the background for the event, beyond describing it as "*Jhūle lāl jayantī* (Birthday of Jhule Lal)." Since "Jayanti" is used for figures from many religious traditions, this designation did not specify a Hindu identification. However, several articles also referred to Jhule Lal as "*bhagavān* (Lord)" that more commonly, though not exclusively, implies a Hindu identification (2002e, 6; 2002a, 4). Those articles that mentioned the *upanayan* at the Shiv Shanti Ashram and the use of a *havan* at the Hari Om Mandir even more clearly reinforced the Hindu identification of the Sindhi community (2002c, 7; 2002b, 6). Interestingly, I did not see the *havan* at the Hari Om Mandir, so I am uncertain whether it took place when I was attending to another part of the activities there, or if the article announcing the event beforehand erroneously mentioned one Hindu element that was not actually used. Another article during this period focused on the debut of an audiocassette by a local Sindhi singer at the *mela* for Cheti Chand (*Sindhī Samāj* 2002d, 4). As the cassette included both Hanuman Chalisa and Bhagavan Jhule Lal Chalisa, it implicitly demonstrated that Jhule Lal was a Hindu deity similar to Hanuman, who was especially popular in Lucknow. The English language *Hindustan Times* also announced the

upcoming commemoration of Jhule Lal's "birth anniversary" and listed the activities as including "bhajan, kirtan, the immersion of Jhoolelal statue and bharana (dough lamp and offerings)" (*Hindustan Times* 2002c, 3). The reference to the immersion of a statue of Jhule Lal implicitly related Cheti Chand with the commemorations of Durga Puja and Ganesh Chaturthi, both of which involved the immersion of images. Like the reference to a *havan*, this announcement emphasized an aspect of the events that I never witnessed, as devotees immersed the *bharana*, not the image. Most likely, the non-Sindhi reporter misunderstood the description of the activities and described them in terms of the reporter's expectations for immersions in Hindu festivals, which illustrates a successful assertion of their Hindu identification in relation to that particular reporter.

Several newspapers described the Cheti Chand events on the day after they took place. On April 14, 2002, an article in the *Hindustān* accompanied with a picture of the procession emphasized the dancing within the procession and stated, interestingly, "*Sarvadharma kī pratīk hindū muslim sīkh va īsaī* (symbols of all religions, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian)" as it described the event (2002b, 6). Although it is possible that the reporter saw an element that he / she associated with Sikh traditions in the procession or the dancing, I suspect that this account reflects what one of the leaders related to the reporter. Considering the different representations among individual Sindhis, the reference to Sikh traditions does not necessarily mean that those elements were physically present in the procession.

Reporting on the second day of festivities, the *Hindustān* described both the *satsang* at the Hari Om Mandir and the smaller *mela* at Sindhi Ghat. Of all of the articles on Cheti Chand, this piece gave the clearest reference to elements commonly understood as Sikh, as it included Ardas in the list of events at the Hari Om Mandir. However, appearing in a list of activities, this element was not particularly emphasized (2002c, 6). The photograph that accompanied this article also appeared in the *Hindustan Times*, this time in color, with a caption that mentioned "the occasion of Sindhi New Year and Jhuleylal anniversary," but that paper gave no further details (2002d, 6).

These various newspaper accounts collectively reveal several significant points. Sindhi Hindus made an effort to publicize the events to non-Sindhis in Lucknow who were literate in either Hindi or English, and the media responded with some coverage, which legitimized the significance of the Sindhi community in the city. In general, these representations implied a Hindu identification for the festivities, though it was not always explicit. However, since no one can fully control how the press represents them and from whom the press receives their information, the image in the media representations was not entirely accurate and was less consistently

Hindu, though only in minor ways, than the images in the processions that I witnessed.

Much like these representations of Cheti Chand in newspapers, Sindhis who represented Cheti Chand directly to me in interviews focused on the significance of their community as well as the variety of elements involved. D. M. Punjabi, the president of the Uttar Pradesh Sindhi Sabha and a leader in other Sindhi cultural organizations and political movements, particularly emphasized Cheti Chand in this manner. After describing at length, various cooperative actions within the Sindhi community, including the celebration of festivals, the promotion of Sindhi language, and political responses to community concerns, he emphasized that Cheti Chand not only developed unity among Sindhi Hindu but also demonstrated political power and gave the community legitimacy. He declared,

> Recently, they sanctioned Cheti Chand as a holiday for the U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] government. The whole U.P. government—departments, schools, colleges—will be closed on Cheti Chand, Jhule Lal Jayanti. This is the birthday of Jhule Lal. Everywhere it will be celebrated, in different cities in U.P., Gonda, Gorakhpur, Faizabad, Rai Bareilly, Lucknow. These are major cities where we will celebrate.
>
> For Jhule Lal Jayanti, from the morning, worship of Jhule Lal is made by Sindhi people, and *bharana*, a sort of procession, carrying a picture of Jhule Lal and a burning lamp on our head while dancing. We come on roads from outside our houses, and ultimately it becomes a large procession coming from each place. It becomes a huge procession with different pictures of Sindhi culture. The large procession ends near the river, and at the river we celebrate a huge function. We immerse the *bharana* in the river. After worship we come back.

His emphases here clearly connected with his activities to address Sindhi issues and organize the community politically. Beyond the declaration of the state holiday, his description of Cheti Chand emphasized repeatedly the size of the processions, which reiterated both the nature of the festival to unite many Sindhis and the image that such a public display of the Sindhi presence in multiple cities created. His characterization of the processions, with people carrying an image of Jhule Lal and a tray of offerings on their heads from their homes to the river, does not exactly match the central procession in Lucknow, with trucks carrying the offerings and devotees from central locations such as the Hari Om Mandir to the river, thus reflecting a difference between idealized expressions of devotion and the realities of organizing a public procession through a large city. Interestingly, his account suggested that, according to one of the organizers, the processions should represent Sindhi culture. Since most Sindhis

included the veneration of Nanak as a significant part of Sindhi culture, the absence of Nanak in the processions that represented that culture was quite significant.

Other Sindhis expressed similar ideas about Cheti Chand, emphasizing the importance of Jhule Lal and his festival for the Sindhi community in diaspora. B. K. Thadani, one of the leaders of the Hari Om Mandir, referred to Cheti Chand as "Sindhi integration day," meaning their unification with each other. He further emphasized how Cheti Chand brought together Sindhis from across Lucknow, which was evident in the coordination of the processions that met for the *mela,* and united Sindhis from different districts of Sindh. Gobind Wadhwani similarly asserted that Sindhis used this celebration to maintain their culture in the context of diaspora. Confirming the increasing significance of Jhule Lal in diaspora, several interviewees suggested that the festival was more common among Sindhis in diaspora than among Sindhi Hindus still in Pakistan. Neither an interviewee who still lived in Sindhi in 2001 nor an interviewee who lived there in the 1980s and 1990s could recall celebrating Cheti Chand in Sindh. These representations reveal the significance of diaspora on Sindhi festival practices. The experience of diaspora necessitates both the unification of their ethnic community, which was not necessarily unified in Sindh, and the desire to illustrate their numerical significance and political / cultural legitimacy as a community through large, public commemorations.

Not every representation of Cheti Chand emphasized the broader issue of political power and community unity, however. Jaya Bhambhwani, who was not very active in the community after marrying a coworker from Bihar, became most animated in discussing Sindhi traditions when she described a traditional Sindhi sweet for Cheti Chand. Nostalgic about her family's traditions in Calcutta during Cheti Chand, she planned to buy Sindhi-style *jalebis* (an Indian sweet) during Cheti Chand from a Sindhi-owned restaurant in Lucknow that made *jalebis*, specifically in the Sindhi fashion, during the festival. She was eagerly anticipating sharing them with her coworkers and family. A young Sindhi retailer, Krishan Gidwani, highlighted a social component of the festival, asserting that it was an opportunity for young men and women to see each other, and thus consider prospects for marriage. Although this statement seemed to exaggerate the festival's significance for matchmaking, since young adults could observe marriage prospects in public at other times, it clearly emphasized the value of communitywide activities for connecting with people of the same ethnic heritage in the context of diaspora and the importance among many Sindhis of marrying within the Sindhi community. Clearly, Cheti Chand, like most religious festivals, was significant for many reasons beyond traditionally religious motivations.

The lack of interest in Cheti Chand that some Sindhis demonstrated reflected the limits of the festival's ability to preserve Sindhi distinctiveness. The week before Cheti Chand, the former president of the Hari Om Mandir, Gobind Wadhwani, who had confirmed the cultural significance of Cheti Chand for Sindhis in diaspora, did not know when the celebration of Cheti Chand would be. Clearly Cheti Chand was not important enough for him to assist in its planning or even to be aware of its schedule. More significantly, several interviewees could not recall any of the names of Jhule Lal when discussing the festival of the Sindhi deity. Although the diasporic context apparently heightened the symbolic importance of Cheti Chand and Jhule Lal for some Sindhis, diaspora also meant that other deities were much more prevalent in daily life, thus relegating Jhule Lal to the periphery of many Sindhis' experiences.

Cheti Chand beyond Lucknow

The significance and ritualized activities of Cheti Chand for Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow was not unique to that city. Sindhi Hindus in many other places celebrated it with processions, offerings to a river, and cultural performances. Growing up in Calcutta, for example, Jaya Bhambhwani recalled that Cheti Chand was a major festival, including a procession in the streets and a gathering at the home of one of the community leaders. These festivities included ritualized worship of Jhule Lal, devotional songs, foods such as the Sindhi-style *jalebis* that she craved, and dancing in a traditional Sindhi fashion.

In the United States, Sindhi Hindus in many places have maintained the celebration of Cheti Chand. In Atlanta, for example, the Sindhi Sabha of Georgia has used the community room in a city park for Cheti Chand numerous times. Their processions were more symbolic than in Lucknow, as community members gathered outside the building and processed through the lobby to the room, with someone in the community carrying a tray of the traditional offerings for Jhule Lal. One year, they reported that they had expanded the procession, carrying an image of Jhule Lal in the back of a pickup truck through the parking lots of the park, but they did not continue that format in subsequent years. Because of the different traffic patterns in suburbs and possibly a concern for their relations to the dominant society in the United States, lengthy street processions such as those in Lucknow were not common among Indian-Americans for any holy day, and the organizers in Georgia apparently felt that organizing a parking lot procession was not effective. The Sindhi Hindu community in

Charlotte, North Carolina, has made similar choices, conducting a brief procession from one building to another within the grounds of the Hindu Center.

Once inside the community room, they circumambulated a temporary shrine to Jhule Lal while playing recorded *bhajans,* including "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar*." Almost everyone took a turn carrying the tray of offerings on their covered head, so the circumambulation continued for twenty minutes or more. In contrast to Lucknow, where often a female family member carried and poured the family's offerings into the river, several families in Atlanta made it a point to bring in their children, who were often playing outside, so that they could take a turn carrying the community's tray of offerings. As with many aspects of the Indian-American community, a major concern was transmitting traditions to the younger generation.

The celebration continued with *arti*, as well as the typical Sindhi Hindu prayer for blessings, during which each person holds up a corner of their clothing to receive the gifts from Lakshmi. The celebration did not involve the collective immersion of the offerings in the nearby Chattahoochee River, although several participants assured me that a community member immersed the offerings there afterward. Beyond these formally ritualized activities, the celebration included a meal with several Sindhi dishes and often some other representation of their heritage. One year, the community brought in musicians who enacted the dominant Sindhi understanding by playing devotional songs that are commonly associated with Sikh gurus and Muslim Sufis as well as Hindu deities. Another year, the children played a quiz game that focused on their Sindhi heritage and specifically Cheti Chand. In another acknowledgment of the importance of Cheti Chand in the community, they installed the officers for the coming year at the gathering, a symbolic reminder that Cheti Chand also commemorates the Sindhi New Year.

Although the ritualized activities were not as public as they were in Lucknow, most aspects of these activities resembled the fully public elements in Lucknow. While Sindhi Hindus in Atlanta, as individuals and collectively as the Sindhi Sabha, sponsored occasional *langars* at a Punjabi dominated *gurdwara,* the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak were not present in Cheti Chand celebrations, except for the year when the musicians presented the array of devotional songs.

Unlike the public celebrations in Lucknow, the reasons for their selection of elements in the Atlanta commemoration of Cheti Chand, other than the format of the procession, appeared to be internal to the community. Because of their particular diasporic context, the primary concern was not the image presented to non-Sindhis. Few non-Sindhis were aware of the festival, and even those people using the other recreational facilities

in the city park who inquired about the procession or the music were not concerned with the specific elements included or excluded in the events. The absence of the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak in this context, where the image to non-Sindhis was not an issue, supports the suggestion that the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak were not an integral part of diasporic constructions of Cheti Chand. Such a confirmation further highlights the significance of the inclusion of the Guru Granth Sahib in Cheti Chand celebrations within Sindhi institutions in Lucknow and confirms the powerful presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak for those institutions. Highlighting the importance of those elements for Sindhis in Lucknow further accentuates the significance of the exclusion of those elements in the public processions, especially if the processions were designed to display Sindhi culture, as D. M. Punjabi described them. The questions about their identification as Hindus that influenced their public representations of this festival in Lucknow also affected their commemoration of Nanak Jayanti in Lucknow, but in a slightly different fashion.

Nanak Jayanti

Further confirming the importance of Nanak for Sindhi Hindus, the celebration of his birthday at the Hari Om Mandir was clearly the largest celebration among Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow. With daily *satsangs* and evening performances for an entire week, this festival dwarfed the two days of festivities for Cheti Chand and the three-day commemoration of Asuda Ram's death anniversary. Since the Shiv Shanti Ashram regularly held *satsangs* twice every day, that institution added fewer additional events to commemorate Nanak Jayanti. Nevertheless, throughout the week leading up to Nanak Jayanti, the *satsangs* at the ashram especially emphasized Nanak. The ashram also supported the special festivities at the Hari Om Mandir by sending a group of musicians from the ashram to perform one evening. Both institutions also conducted an *akhand path* to conclude the week.

The length of the commemoration and the ardent devotion that participants expressed, particularly at the climax of the week, illustrated how significant Nanak was for both individual Sindhis and the community as a whole, making their lack of attention to Nanak during the public events for Cheti Chand even more telling. During Nanak Jayanti, in stark contrast to Cheti Chand, they clearly performed the Sindhi understanding that Nanak was a Hindu and that Sikh traditions are a subset within Hinduism. While none of the events occurred outside the Sindhi institutions, the community

still used the occasions to enhance the public profile of the Sindhi Hindu community.

The commemoration of Nanak Jayanti at the Hari Om Mandir, which I emphasize because of their extended activities, involved the insertion of additional ritualized activities into the regular *satsang* format. At the Sunday morning *satsang* that week, for example, devotees honored a Tulsi plant. They waved clay lamps, offered water, and circumambulated the plant. Lila Advani also marked the foreheads of many who had worshiped the Tulsi. W. H. Gurnani then inserted a reading from the Tulsi Katha in the middle of the regular devotional songs, before the discourse on the Gita.

Although this emphasis on the Tulsi plant highlighted traditions that many non-Sindhis recognized as Hindu, during *arti* on that Sunday, the community focused exclusively on the Guru Granth Sahib and the canopy, waving only that central lamp instead of having one lamp for each shrine as well as the canopy. After the typical Ardas and the readings from the canopied Guru Granth Sahib and the Bhagavad Gita, however, the focus shifted back to the Tulsi. While the men retreated into a corner of the hall, the women circumambulated the room, touching the base of the canopy and various deity shrines. Several women began a much smaller circle moving around the Tulsi plant and repeatedly switched out with women in the larger line. While this activity, with its inner circle, emphasized the Tulsi plant, it incorporated the canopy and *murtis* as secondary elements.

During the prayer to Lakshmi and the concluding *bhajan,* many participants filed into the auditorium, where the leaders served a full meal as *prasad.* Interestingly, the Tulsi elements, the single flame, and the meal were the main differences between this *satsang* and the regular Sunday morning *satsangs.* Although the week celebrated Nanak, the additions related to the Tulsi plant diverged from standard understandings of Sikh traditions, and the full meal did not follow the standard form of a Sikh *langar,* as everyone moved through a buffet line and sat in chairs instead of being served in rows on the floor.

When I inquired about the veneration of Tulsi during Nanak Jayanti, W. H. Gurnani explained that Nanak Jayanti falls on Kartik Purnima, the full moon in the month of Kartik, which is a traditional time for the recitation of Tulsi Katha. He then connected the Tulsi Katha with Nanak by asserting that Tulsi was the spouse of Vishnu and that Nanak was an incarnation of Vishnu. These additional activities during Nanak Jayanti, therefore, not only honored the various elements within the community's heritage but also, in Gurnani's explanation, performed the Sindhi assertion that Nanak was an avatar of Vishnu.

An unintentional visual reminder of the Hindu connections of the community greeted each visitor to that Sunday morning *satsang* during the

week of Nanak Jayanti. A larger-than-life image of Satya Sai Baba (a non-Sindhi guru / religious figure from South India) adorned the gate of the temple, smiling down at each person. The previous night, Satya Sai Baba's followers had used the temple's facilities to celebrate their guru's birthday, and they were continuing to disassemble their decorations that morning. While the Hari Om Mandir frequently offered its facilities to other groups, the image of a prominent guru at the gate of the temple during the commemoration of Nanak Jayanti was particularly startling considering the dominant understanding of Sikhism that rejected any gurus other than Nanak and his lineage. In this way, even this unintentional addition reinforced Sindhi understandings that devotion to Nanak did not exclude devotion to other deities and gurus.

In the latter part of the weeklong celebrations, the community sponsored additional events. In addition to special performances of devotional music, the community sponsored a children's competition, in which children sang devotional songs or recited portions of religious texts. The most enthusiastic response from the audience, interestingly, came when one child sang part of "*Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar.*" On hearing that song, many spectators clapped and sang along with the child. In this way, the devotion to Jhule Lal remained significant on this occasion honoring Nanak, even though the occasion for Nanak's birthday was bigger than the commemoration of Jhule Lal's birthday.

The centerpiece of the festivities was the *akhand path*. Devotees took shifts reading from the Gurmukhi text under the canopy, and they took seriously the concept of a continuous reading, as they were often particularly careful not to stop the reading as the next reader slid behind the Guru Granth Sahib and continued the recitation. The entire week reached its climax with the conclusion of the *akhand path* during the morning *satsang* on November 30. The *satsang* hall was especially decorated, with multicolored metallic garlands adorning many of the deity shrines and strands of lights twinkling inside the canopy. The small image of Nanak, which usually sat beside Jhule Lal, was in the front center of the canopy, garlanded with flowers.

In addition to the regular presence of deity shrines in the *satsang* hall, the climax of Nanak Jayanti specifically enacted Sindhi understandings with the presence of the Tulsi plant, which sat in the middle of the auditorium, in line with the canopy. The partitions that usually divided the two rooms were open to both accommodate the larger crowd and allow space for the veneration of the Tulsi. At the end of the recitation of the Tulsi Katha, Lila Advani placed a red and gold cloth on the Guru Granth Sahib, then waved a tray with a lit *diya* before the canopy as Sona Gurnani sang "*Jaya Jagadīsh Hare.*" Other women joined Advani, as she took the tray to

wave it before the Tulsi plant. While the regular Sunday *satsangs* focused on a flame that the Guru Granth Sahib had blessed, during the final day of Nanak Jayanti, the blessed flame that a woman presented to everyone had received the blessings of both the Guru Granth Sahib and the Tulsi.

As the *satsang* continued, devotees venerated the Tulsi plant by lighting *diyas* and circumambulating it as they arrived. Most devotees honored the Guru Granth Sahib in some manner, bowing before the canopy, waving a flywhisk, or presenting a garland. As the conclusion of the *akhand path* approached, a young woman, dressed in a black salwar kameez with a black dupatta covering her hair, slid behind the Guru Granth Sahib to take over the reading from a turbaned Sikh who served the texts occasionally in the Hari Om Mandir. As she read the final passages, leaders waved the three flywhisks, and officials prevented anyone from approaching the canopy. Immediately afterward, devotees formed a line to offer brocaded cloths to the Guru Granth Sahib, like they did at the Shiv Shanti Ashram during the *mela* for Asuda Ram. The final reader and several volunteers helped each donor spread her/his cloth over the Guru Granth Sahib, while the musicians sang devotional songs. As the stack of cloths grew, another woman pulled off cloths and began folding them neatly, while others continued to present more cloths.

After twenty minutes with a constant stream of devotees presenting cloths, the line of devotees dwindled, though people still presented their cloths as they arrived. The *satsang* shifted to a second *arti* before the Guru Granth Sahib. An officer of the institution waved the lone tray before the canopy, and volunteers told everyone to sit down, rather than the usual practice of everyone standing. The community then proceeded with Ardas and the daily reading from the Guru Granth Sahib. As these elements concluded, devotees who arrived during these activities lined up to present their cloths. For at least another ten minutes, the musicians sang devotional songs to accompany those offerings. Other devotees began moving to the back courtyard for the *langar,* which followed typical Sikh practices of sitting on the floor while food is brought down each line, unlike the procedures the previous Sunday. This *langar* was similar to the *langar* for Cheti Chand, although the larger crowd necessitated the use of the back courtyard. In fact, the crowd was so large that a constant stream of devotees arrived to be fed over the course of several hours.

As a part of their organization of the event, leaders of the Hari Om Mandir made an interesting effort to democratize the presentation of cloths to the Guru Granth Sahib, which they used all year to adorn the various *murtis* as well as the texts under the canopy. Throughout this climactic day, volunteers sat at a table in the front courtyard with stacks of cloths that devotees could "purchase" for a nominal donation and then

present to the Guru Granth Sahib in the *satsang* hall. In addition to cloths that devotees had presented in previous years, whenever the women who removed the cloths from the canopy had a significant stack, someone would carry them outside to allow others to offer them over the next few hours. W. H. Gurnani explained that the practice raised a small amount of money and saved devotees hundreds of rupees. Perhaps most importantly, it enabled less wealthy devotees to express their devotion by ritually presenting a cloth.

Around one o'clock, several of the main leaders escorted the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Rajnath Singh, into the *satsang* hall, stopping the music and offerings to the Guru Granth Sahib. The chief minister spoke in Hindi for fifteen minutes, and then the central leaders presented him with a shawl in appreciation. After he left, devotees again presented their cloths to the Guru Granth Sahib. With the presence of the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, along with other politicians and his retinue of journalists and subordinates, the events clearly highlighted the influence of the Sindhi Hindu community of Lucknow, and specifically the Hari Om Mandir, to warrant the attention of powerful leaders in the state. In fact, several Sindhis emphasized to me the presence of the chief minister and other politicians at Nanak Jayanti in previous years. Moreover, in these actions, the veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib was secondary to the limited time schedule of the chief minister, further demonstrating the importance the organizers placed on the legitimacy that his presence gave to the community and its political power.

Published Representations of Nanak Jayanti

Beyond their efforts to host politicians for Nanak Jayanti, the community publicized their festivities in several ways. Before Nanak Jayanti, leaders announced the commemorations in several fliers that clearly incorporated symbols typically connected to both Hindu and Sikh traditions. The four-page, full color program for Nanak Jayanti included invitations to attend and relevant information in Sindhi, Hindi, and English. As with the ritualized activities for Nanak Jayanti, the program reiterated the community's relation to both Sikh and Hindu traditions by decorating the program with an Ik-Om-Kar, which is usually identified as a Sikh symbol, and an Om.

In addition to these self-published announcements, the community made use of the local newspapers as well. Six separate articles in the *Sindhī Samāj* column in the *Hindustān* detailed the observance of Nanak Jayanti at the Hari Om Mandir before and during the commemorations. Significantly, each article balanced the veneration of Nanak with references to the Tulsi

Puja or other elements associated with Hindu traditions (2001c, 6; 2001d, 6; 2001e, 6; 2001f, 6; 2001g, 6; 2001h, 4). Of the two announcements of Nanak Jayanti in the *Hindustan Times*, one included a reference to Tulsi Katha (2001b, 3; 2001c, 3).

With the efforts that the leaders put into publicizing their celebration of the festival, the community clearly did not hide its devotion to Nanak. However, in both the published representations and in the ritualized activities themselves, the community generally framed their devotion to Nanak within elements that non-Sindhis recognized as Hindu. As the incorporation of the Tulsi plant and the recitation of Tulsi Katha highlighted, the commemoration of Nanak Jayanti enacted their understanding that this festival, and all of Sikh traditions, fit within the boundaries of Hinduism.

Nanak Jayanti and Sindhis in Non-Sindhi Institutions

The celebration of Nanak Jayanti within smaller Sindhi Hindu communities who do not have their own institutions becomes more complicated. Often, Sindhis who want to commemorate the birthday in a collective environment must do so at a Punjabi *gurdwara,* because most other institutions do not commemorate the holiday. For example, the Sindhi Sabha of Georgia did not conduct a Sindhi celebration of Nanak Jayanti. However, in 2004, the Sindhi Sabha announced to its members one Punjabi *gurdwara's* events commemorating Nanak Jayanti. Interestingly, the announcement explicitly stated that the invitation was sent at the request of the *gurdwara* itself. Although this request illustrates the cooperation between the Sindhi community and the *gurdwara,* the explicit statement also reinforced that the event was not a celebration that the Sindhi Sabha officially sponsored. Since T. L. Vaswani's birthday is the day after Nanak Jayanti, the Sadhu Vaswani Center in Atlanta incorporated Nanak Jayanti into their celebration of their founding guru's birthday, placing an image of Nanak alongside the image of T. L. Vaswani and, in 2007, inviting Sikh musicians to contribute to their devotional singing.

Even in a situation such as this, where the communities cooperated well, the Sindhis who attended the festivities at that *gurdwara* not only formed a minority there but also did so in an institution that recognized a clear boundary dividing Sikhism and Hinduism. Therefore, the institution itself and the festival activities implicitly rejected Sindhi Hindu understandings of Sikh traditions as being ultimately Hindu. While the Sindhi Sabha of Georgia chose not to bring Nanak into the commemorations of Cheti Chand, the Sindhi participants at the *gurdwara* did not even

have the option of inserting the veneration of the Tulsi plant, Jhule Lal, or any other figure that the dominant definitions identified as Hindu into the collective activities for Nanak Jayanti. Therefore, the Sindhi Hindus in Atlanta experienced their heritage in a segmented fashion, with Jhule Lal and Nanak completely separated. While such segmented experiences derived from both their formations for Cheti Chand and their continued dependence on a *gurdwara* that Punjabi Sikhs dominated, the separated practices fostered a significantly different experience from participation in the institutions in Lucknow. Many other Sindhi Hindus who have not established their own institutions face similar challenges as they construct and perform their heritage.

Sacred Figures and Regional Symbols

The clear differences between celebrations of Cheti Chand and Nanak Jayanti provide further insights into Sindhi Hindu experiences and the different ways Jhule Lal and Nanak operated among Sindhi Hindus. While Jhule Lal was not a universal Sindhi figure before Partition, the challenges that Sindhi Hindus faced in diaspora encouraged them to accept him as an important symbol of Sindhi identification and to commemorate his birthday as a symbol of their regional heritage. Since Jhule Lal resembled other Hindu deities, he and his birthday did not generate many doubts about their Hindu identification, despite the distinctive and ambiguous elements of his appearance. When Sindhi Hindus celebrated Cheti Chand, therefore, they could celebrate their regional heritage specifically as Hindus and represent Jhule Lal directly as a Hindu deity. Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib were not helpful in representing their community as Hindu because the broader society typically recognized both elements as being Punjabi and Sikh, leading Sindhis to exclude them from the public celebrations of Cheti Chand.

In contrast, Sindhi Hindus generally could not allow Nanak to stand alone as a symbol of their community. Many Sindhi representations of Nanak associated him with Vishnu or Jhule Lal, and the commemoration of Nanak Jayanti among Sindhis in Lucknow involved the addition of the recitation of the Tulsi Katha. Although W. H. Gurnani explained that they incorporated the veneration of the Tulsi to respond to participants who wanted to commemorate Kartik Purnima also, his assertion that the inclusion was justified because both the Tulsi and Nanak were related to Vishnu served, perhaps more importantly, to place Nanak in a Hindu frame. Unlike Jhule Lal, Nanak by himself could not represent the

Sindhi Hindu community because the Sikh community had staked an exclusive claim to him that many non-Sindhis recognized. In the context of diaspora, the freedom of Sindhi Hindus to represent their community and enact their understanding of their heritage was not absolute, as the assumptions of the broader community limited the efficacious actions and representations of Sindhis, if they hoped to be recognized as Hindus.

Outside of Lucknow, Sindhi Hindus faced different choices about the commemoration of Cheti Chand and Nanak Jayanti that, nevertheless, reflected the same issue of symbolism. The Sindhi Sabha of Georgia, for example, organized their primary gathering and installation of new officers for Cheti Chand. While they also organized a special event for Diwali, the absence of a Sindhi-wide celebration for Nanak Jayanti in Atlanta, along with the absence of Nanak in their Cheti Chand, further confirms that Jhule Lal has become a community symbol for Sindhis, whereas the position of Nanak is more limited. When the Sindhi Sabha passed on the announcements about the commemoration of Nanak Jayanti at the *gurdwara,* they recognized the importance of that festival for some in the community, but the festival did not warrant a community-wide celebration. As Sindhi Hindus in Atlanta participated in Nanak Jayanti at the *gurdwara,* the event did not represent a specifically Sindhi occasion since it did not incorporate other aspects of Sindhi Hindu traditions. The reminders were plentiful at the *gurdwara* that this was a Punjabi community in which the Sindhis were a distinct minority. While the devotees of T. L. Vaswani commemorated Nanak Jayanti, they did so as an addition to their central purpose, honoring T. L. Vaswani's birthday.

Therefore, the contrast between Nanak Jayanti and Cheti Chand reinforced the different significations of these two figures for Sindhi Hindus. Jhule Lal and Cheti Chand symbolized the unique regional heritage of Sindh and their identification as Hindus, even reinforcing the tension between animosity toward Muslims and valorization of Hindu-Muslim harmony. While Nanak Jayanti was important for many Sindhi Hindus, Nanak was not Sindhi, and he could not represent the community, as others had placed a strident claim to his identity and heritage that the broader society largely recognized. The construction of their practices in both Atlanta and Lucknow were not simply about expressing their devotion to sacred figures. These issues of signification and the broader dynamics of their diasporic contexts limited their agency to develop their traditions, particularly considering their desire to be recognized as Hindus. While these issues influenced how Sindhi communities celebrated both festivals, individual Sindhis were less constrained in their choices than the communities as a whole, which created a different set of challenges for these individuals.

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Chapter 6

Personalizing Traditions

R. D. Gurnani, a retired engineer who was a member of the executive committee of the Hari Om Mandir in Lucknow, illustrates some of the variety of practices among individual Sindhis. As the children's competition that was a part of the Hari Om Mandir's celebration of Nanak Jayanti took place in the next room, he explained to me that he fulfilled any duties assigned to him at the Hari Om Mandir, but, because of the distance of the institution from his home, he visited other non-Sindhi sites more frequently. In addition to his presence at the Hari Om Mandir for at least one Sunday morning *satsang* each month, which was followed by a meeting of the executive committee, on most Tuesdays he visited a Hanuman temple near his home in the Trans-Gomti suburbs of Lucknow, and sometimes on Mondays he visited a Shiva temple. He justified these practices, saying, "We go often because of being near."

Gurnani, in the older generation of the Sindhi community who had been born in Sindh before Partition, had limited memories of Sindh. In our interview, he focused instead on the practices of his family in Lucknow. When his mother was alive, she visited a predominantly Punjabi *gurdwara* that was close to their home, a practice that he continued occasionally after her death. He specifically distinguished the *gurdwara* from the Hari Om Mandir, saying, "This is a temple; there are other gods also. In a *gurdwara,* only the Guru Granth Sahib." However, neither he nor his mother kept a Guru Granth Sahib at home because of the daily ritualized activities that keeping a Guru Granth Sahib necessitated.

In response to my questions about Sufi practices, he also explained that he had visited the *dargah* of Nizam ad-Din Chishti in Delhi several times, as it was near his in-laws. He continued, "I do believe in some of the *dargahs* which are renowned and have been accepted by many individuals

of different religions." When I asked about *dargahs* in Lucknow, though, he explained that he did not visit them.

He responded to my questions about life cycle rituals in his family with an explanation of the changes in both his family and the larger community.

SWR - For a funeral, do you do a *path*?

G - Both Sikhs and all Hindus—all Hindus, including Sikhs, Punjabis, Sindhis, are cremated. At that time Ardas is read, which is from Guru Nanak. Other Hindus, they pray from the Gita or other *slokas*. And on the 13th day from death, Sikhs who have turbans, they necessarily have Guru Granth Sahib *path*. For 13 days they go on reading, and on the last day it is completed and special functions are held.
Some Sindhis do this. Other Hindus and some Sindhis do *havan* on the 13th day, the closing ceremony in memory of a dead person. All functions are completed and normal routine continues.

SWR - In your family, do you do a *path*?

G - My mother used to follow this too much, so I am also continuing this. On occasion of the death of my mother, I had the Guru Granth Sahib brought from the *gurdwara* and read for 13 days, including the day on which she died. Hindi people call it thirteenth day. We call it twelfth; Sindhi people call it *barah* [twelve]. But I am not sure whether my son will follow *path* or *havan*.
I myself on occasion of marriage or start of some good work did *havan* through priest, thereby meaning I too am in a transition stage. *Path* and *havan* we do for entry in house for the first time.

SWR - Did you have a *havan* at your wedding?

G - *Path* at my marriage, but at time of marriage we always have a *havan*. All Sindhis, ninety-five percent have *havan*. But some who are following Sikh *panth* [sect or way], they strictly marry according to Sikh religion, and some Sindhis also. It is said, you remember, Sindhis who don't get easily a son, they wish in front of the Guru Granth Sahib and Guru Nanak. If a son is born, they will put him as a Sikh.

Gurnani also had interests beyond traditionally religious practices. He explicitly wanted to promote the culture and community of Sahiti, a district in Sindh. He had served as an organizer for the Lucknow association of people from Sahiti. In addition to telling me about various leaders who had come from that part of Sindh, he proudly gave me two copies of their directory in an effort to promote the appreciation of the region. He specifically asked me to pass one copy on to anyone who could benefit from learning about their heritage.

Diversity and Diaspora among Individual Sindhi Hindus

As Gurnani demonstrates, individual Sindhi Hindus and family units established their own forms of practices and traditions that often reflected the ideals of their Sindhi heritage, family traditions, personal interests, the logistics of living in a big city, and even simple happenstance. In addition to presenting further analysis of the experiences and statements of Gurnani, in this chapter I discuss a range of other individuals and family units who illustrate well the diversity in the community. The individuals whose statements I analyzed in the preceding chapters were mostly active members, often central leaders, in these various movements, so their assertions and combinations of practices reflected a deep interest in Sindhi activities and heritage that was not universal among Sindhis. The Sindhis described here, while some are in leadership positions, reflect a wider variety of commitments to ritualized traditions and specific institutions. Although few rejected their Sindhi heritage explicitly, many Sindhis in Lucknow referred me to the Hari Om Mandir when I asked about Sindhi religious activities, asserting that someone at the temple could answer my questions better than they could. Besides lacking confidence to discuss Sindhi activities, many of these individuals seldom, if ever, participated in Sindhi events or other aspects of their regional heritage.

Devout attention to religious practices and participation in Sindhi events only partially correlated with the generation of the individual. Those born before Partition typically participated in both general religious practices and Sindhi activities more regularly than those born after Partition, as the concerns that Sindhi leaders expressed about the younger generations suggested. However, that correlation was not complete, as some Sindhis in both generations defied those assumptions. I have selected several examples that particularly disrupt those correlations to demonstrate the complexity of the community in relation to individual practices and appreciation for Sindhi culture. Therefore, because of this emphasis on those who defied generational assumptions, the selections in this chapter do not reflect the statistical composition of the broader Sindhi community in Lucknow.

Recognizing such individual expressions of agency illustrates the vitality and diversity within the Sindhi Hindu community, yet it also raises further questions about the experiences on the individual level. Like the formation of community practices in Lucknow and elsewhere that required the negotiation of the competing pressures of maintaining a distinct heritage and assimilating to the broader diasporic context, embedded

within the assertions of personal agency of Gurnani and many others is the pressure of being immersed in a different cultural context for most or all of one's life. The issue of transition, as Gurnani termed it, was a factor of this immersion, as their socialization with non-Sindhis and the need to communicate with them further compelled Sindhis to grapple with and, to an extent, absorb the dominant understandings of religious boundaries that they contested.

The participation in multiple ritualized traditions furthered the influence of the dominant definitions. While the ritualized traditions in the Hari Om Mandir reinforced the predominant Sindhi constructions of those boundaries, participation in non-Sindhi events heightened the power of the predominant definitions of religious traditions, as participants experienced the relationships physically, whether they assented intellectually or not.[1] These experiences further complicated the tension between hegemonic understandings and Sindhi definitions that the shifting use of terms in the statements of Sindhis such as Gurnani often demonstrated. Although physical participation in ritual schemes does not eliminate agency, as earlier chapters have demonstrated, it complicates that process by fostering competing understandings that contribute to cognitive dissonance. As with the representations of Nanak and Jhule Lal, the agency of individual Sindhi Hindus to select which ritualized activities that they follow takes place in a specific context, not in a vacuum.

Sindhis who have migrated beyond South Asia face similar issues, though the specifics of each context influence those issues. One of the Sindhis in Lucknow, whom I include in this chapter, spent part of his adult life in Nigeria, which provides an important contrast with his experiences in Lucknow. Although surveying individual practices throughout the world is beyond the scope of this project, I also describe the experiences of one family in Atlanta, Georgia, who illustrate some of the similarities and differences between the challenges that Sindhis faced in Lucknow and in Georgia.

R. D. Gurnani

R. D. Gurnani's statements reflect the tension between expressions of his agency and the powerful influence of the dominant understandings of religious boundaries. His personal practices included a Sindhi institution, a non-Sindhi Hindu temple, a Punjabi Sikh *gurdwara, havans, paths*, and an occasional visit to a Muslim Sufi *dargah.* His implicit and explicit explanations of these traditions are significant. In a general sense, he emphasized the Punjabi influence on Sindhi traditions through Nanak's visits to Sindh

to spread his teachings. In relation to his specific choices, he provided a variety of explanations that included issues of convenience and family traditions. However, throughout his discussion of these practices, he repeatedly illustrated the powerful influence of the dominant understandings as he shifted between typical Sindhi explanations and the replication of the dominant understandings.

Gurnani's more specific explanations of his own group of practices were suggestive of the experiences of Sindhi Hindus more generally. Sitting in the Hari Om Mandir, he explained his more regular attendance at a non-Sindhi Hindu temple and a Punjabi *gurdwara* as being a matter of convenience. He did not live close to the Hari Om Mandir, so he visited these other sites instead of attempting to traverse the congested metropolitan area. As a largely middle-class minority, Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow and elsewhere were dispersed across their cities, making it difficult to congregate at any of the few Sindhi sites in a city and preventing the insulation of these communities from non-Sindhi traditions. Such dynamics of diaspora also influenced the development of institutions, as the examples in Chennai in chapter 2 illustrated. The concentrated settlements of Sindhis in Ulhasnagar (outside of Mumbai) and a few other cities in India were the primary exceptions to this characteristic of their dispersal. Gurnani's visits to Nizam ad-din Chishti's *dargah* had a somewhat similar preliminary explanation. Those visits did not involve a specific pilgrimage to the shrine but were convenient side trips when he visited his in-laws. Even though the issue of convenience was significant, he may have used that explanation as a way to downplay his attachment to other sites during an event at the Hari Om Mandir.

His practices also reflected a significant influence from his parents. He explicitly emphasized his mother's focus on the *gurdwara* and the Guru Granth Sahib and the continuing influence of her practices on him, including his feelings of guilt for being in transition. Similarly, he explained his attraction to the Sufi site by relating his father's emphasis on Sufism. While Gurnani was growing up, his father continually recited under his breath the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif, a famous Sufi of Sindh.

Family traditions and convenience, however, did not explain fully his visits to Nizam ad-din Chishti's *dargah,* as he never attempted to connect Nizam ad-din Chishti specifically to his father. Since many Sufi shrines in Lucknow were obviously much more convenient, his selection did not arise because of the shrine's proximity to his home. Moreover, Nizam ad-din was not closely tied to Sindh, so this choice was not related to the differentiation between Sindhi Sufis and non-Sindhi Sufis in Lucknow. Implying a clear distinction between Nizam ad-din and other Sufis, Gurnani asserted that he visited and believed in only famous Sufi *pirs* who were accepted by

people from many religions. Since many Sufis in Lucknow had significant multireligious followings, the remaining portion of his statements revolves around how "famous" a Sufi is. As one of the most famous Sufis in India, few can rival Nizam ad-din's fame. Whatever actually influenced his veneration of Nizam ad-din, his explanation emphasized this fame, which placed his relation to Sufis in the context of a tradition widely recognized by non-Sindhi Hindus. This explanation clearly diverged from the redefinitions of Sufism discussed in previous chapters.

Emphasizing Gurnani's agency, it is possible to outline a variety of interests that fueled his varied practices. His regional heritage and aspects of family traditions played a role in his inclusion of these general elements, while issues of convenience were often significant for his decision to visit particular sites over others. As statements made to a non-Sindhi in the context of celebrations at the Hari Om Mandir, these explanations did not necessarily reflect all of the factors influencing his decisions to participate or not participate, but they presented a general picture of some of his concerns.

This variety of practices influenced Gurnani and other Sindhi Hindus who participated in both Sindhi and non-Sindhi sites, regardless of the reasons they chose to participate. Paying obeisance to *murtis* at a non-Sindhi temple, bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib at a Punjabi *gurdwara,* and giving gifts to the tomb of a Sufi placed Gurnani in relation to three ritual hierarchies that excluded the others and reinforced the dominant understandings of Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam as separate religions. Similarly, the *havans* that he conducted on special occasions, with a priest reciting Sanskrit *slokas* before a fire, placed Gurnani in a different ritual scheme than the continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib did. As each ritualized activity excluded elements that the dominant understandings placed in other religions, each of these ritual schemes contrasted the combination of the various elements at the Hari Om Mandir, which formed a single integrated hierarchy. His participation at the non-Sindhi sites, therefore, repeatedly reinforced the prominent definitions that these three traditions are separate while the Hari Om Mandir validated the Sindhi Hindu understanding that these elements are all related to Hinduism. Therefore, the differences in his physical participation at various sites reinforced the tension between the dominant definitions of religious boundaries and the general Sindhi understandings.

Although Gurnani resisted these ritual schemes in his continued participation at all of the sites, their influence on Gurnani, as well as the impact of immersion in a non-Sindhi society, became evident in Gurnani's shifting use of the terms Hindu, Sikh, and Sindhi. Throughout the excerpt at the beginning of the chapter, Gurnani struggled between using terms

according to the Sindhi definitions and the dominant understandings in Lucknow. As he juggled the three categories, Sindhi, Sikh, and Hindu, he made visible the liminal position of Sindhis and the absence of adequate terms to express that liminality. He first corrected his statement "Both Sikhs and Hindus," which differentiated Sikhs from Hindus, to "All Hindus including Sikhs, Punjabis, Sindhis" thus incorporating Sikhs and Sindhis as subcategories within the Hindu group. When he implied that reciting Ardas at a cremation was standard, perhaps for Sindhis and Punjabis, he contrasted that activity with the practices of "other Hindus." He then differentiated the practices of "Sikhs who have turbans" from "other Hindus," while placing "some Sindhis" in each category.

Similarly, he distinguished between a *gurdwara* and the Hari Om Mandir in the interview, thereby following traditional Sikh definitions of a proper *gurdwara,* which should contain only a Guru Granth Sahib, not images of deities. The Hari Om Mandir, from that perspective, only fit in the category of temple, even though it differed from typical Hindu temples, because no other vocabulary was available in the context of diaspora to describe the institution. He implicitly reinforced these distinctions in the excerpt when he described bringing the Guru Granth Sahib from a Punjabi *gurdwara* when his mother died. His statements suggested that his mother preferred a proper *gurdwara* and that he organized the *path* following her death from a *gurdwara* because of her preference. Therefore, his Sindhi heritage, as his mother presented it, suggested that the Hari Om Mandir's formation of traditions was inferior to Punjabi Sikh traditions. His shifting language reflects the common challenge of participating in multiple discourses simultaneously and the specific challenge Sindhi Hindus have faced being immersed in a society whose common terms do not include their understanding of practices.

In relation to marriage practices, he suggested that he had changed to the use of a *havan,* as a part of his transition, but then stated explicitly that his wedding included a *path*. When he declared, "But at time of marriage we always have a *havan*. All Sindhis, ninety-five percent have *havan,*" he seemed to shift from the context of his own wedding to a general community statement, leaving it unclear whether he had both a *path* and a *havan* at his wedding or just a *path*. On the basis of his other representations, I understood this shift as a concern to represent the broader Sindhi Hindu community as being fully Hindu to an outsider rather than highlighting a distinction between his family and the larger Sindhi community. He further connected most Sindhis with Hindu traditions, separating out Sindhis who follow Sikh traditions "strictly." His explanation of sonless Sindhis praying before the Guru Granth Sahib, nevertheless, reinforced the centrality of that text as the main source of sacred power for some

Sindhi Hindus, while reinforcing the distinctiveness of being a Sindhi Sikh. Despite this distinctiveness, this statement did not clearly identify Sikhism as a separate religion the way his earlier correction did.

Gurnani explicitly discussed the influence of the experience of diaspora, especially the pressure of immersion in another cultural context, as he emphasized the generational differences that Sindhis repeatedly discussed. He asserted, "All old people, even in India now, are following most of the religious days of Guru Nanak, and they stayed among the methods—say, after death for peace to the soul—by observing, doing Ardas." A moment later, he finished the contrast as he declared, "Influence from other gods has also taken place. Children study with other Hindu students who are worshipping all the gods like Ganesh, Krishna, Ram and like Shankar Bhagavan." Arguing that those who grew up in Lucknow had shifted from the Guru Granth Sahib because of their exposure to other Hindu gods, he distinguished not only between practices in Sindh and practices in Lucknow, but also between Hindu and Sikh traditions. His emphasis on the influence of Hindu students, not Sikh or Muslim students, on the younger Sindhis reflected their association specifically with the majority community in Lucknow.

These generational differences had several personal dimensions for him. On the one hand, his tone and body language when he stated that he could not be assured that his son would perform a *path* at the time of Gurnani's own passing, rather than a *havan,* revealed a clear sense of disappointment. This emotional response possibly was related to the increased emphasis on the Guru Granth Sahib during the commemoration of Nanak Jayanti and / or the comments about his mother that preceded the statement. Gurnani also highlighted his attachment to the Guru Granth Sahib as he described his effort to take his son and daughter-in-law to a Punjabi *gurdwara* to receive the blessings there after their marriage, which presumably involved a *havan.* On the other hand, he mentioned his transitions as he often hired a priest to conduct a *havan* instead of sponsoring a *path* of the Guru Granth Sahib. Therefore, the transitions that he worried about were not limited to his son and his son's generation.

Considering both his clear emotional tie to the Guru Granth Sahib and his admission about his own changes in diaspora, Gurnani revealed another tension within the diasporic experiences of Sindhis. The transitions were not simply a collective issue for the community as a whole, which caused those committed to Sindhi traditions to worry about the future. Even Sindhis who were very interested in their heritage experienced a tension that individual changes exacerbated. The repeated denials of even Sindhi leaders about knowing their own traditions and their attempts to refer me to Sindhis in other places who did things "right" were

other examples of this sense of inadequacy that arose from the creation of heritage in diaspora. With the pressures of diaspora in a community that is similar to the majority community yet still different and the realities of life within a dispersed community in a metropolitan area, Gurnani was conflicted in his practices at times and illustrated how an individual expression of agency did not automatically mean that a person made logical choices that satisfied all of his concerns or interests.

He expressed his own sense of transition in another way during the interview, and in the process, he again demonstrated the challenge of maintaining a Sindhi understanding consistently and explicitly. He characterized his practices, "So my following has been seventy percent to Guru Nanak, thirty percent to other Hindu gods." Explicitly distinguishing between his devotion to Nanak and to Hindu elements, this statement further reinforced the differentiation of Sikh traditions. However, the insertion of the word "other" to modify Hindu gods implied that Nanak was one among many Hindu deities, thus maintaining Sindhi understandings. Even in the analysis of the statement, the implications are ambiguous, much like his own attitudes toward transition.

His basis for these figures of seventy percent Nanak and thirty percent Hindu deities was unclear, as he had emphasized his transition in organizing a *havan* instead of an *akhand path* for special events. Moreover, he visited a Hanuman temple more frequently than a *gurdwara* or the Hari Om Mandir. Perhaps, he inflated his commitment to Nanak in this statement because of the interview context of Nanak Jayanti. However, the difference between his self-representations and his practices also reflect the asymmetry between practices and idealized representations that is not unique to his experiences or Sindhi Hindu experiences in general. While he expressed agency in his selection of practices, the regularity of his attendance at particular religious sites did not automatically correspond to what was most important to him. The frequency of his visits to the Hanuman temple might reflect the convenience of its location, which he had emphasized, more than his preference for Hindu deities. His interest in having Ardas recited in a *gurdwara* after his son's wedding supports such a conclusion. Moreover, his shifting representations reflect the process of interconnected development, as his changing practices influenced his representations, even as they remained incongruent.

Gurnani's assertions about personal transitions also recognized a deliberate "blending" of Sindhi traditions with the mainstream traditions of Lucknow, in other words syncretism as presented by Kraft, among others (2002, 149). This application of syncretism moves the term toward the recognition of variety within one religion, as commonly understood. Rather than blending different religions, Gurnani's syncretism involved the blending of Sindhi

Hindu and North Indian Hindu forms, along with Punjabi practices that he sometimes labeled as Hindu and sometimes as Sikh.

This process continues, as these various tensions reflected the unsettled nature of his own practices. On a personal level, he experienced a tension between maintaining his heritage and uniting with the majority community in Lucknow that made him somewhat uncomfortable with the selections that he had made. As the dominant understandings appeared to undermine his ability to express his Sindhi understandings, the diasporic experience also complicated his ritualized expressions of devotion and religious commitment.

Young Sindhi Retailers

R. D. Gurnani's personal uncertainty and concerns for the younger generation were not entirely unfounded, as a variety of Sindhis who were born in India after Partition confirmed many of his assertions about generational differences. I conducted brief interviews with several young Sindhi men who managed small retail shops that served a different clientele than the well-established shops of Sindhis such as B. K. Thadani. Their experiences and perspectives differed significantly from those of Gurnani and other older Sindhis because they never experienced the turmoil of Partition and the early period of resettlement. Many of these younger Sindhis were less confident in discussing Sindhi traditions than the older Sindhis. Because of the other demands on their time, they were also less willing to participate in longer interviews. Several of them specifically referred me to the Hari Om Mandir or particular older members of the community, both of which served as symbols of their Sindhi heritage for these younger Sindhis.

Despite their reticence, they each revealed a different, often complex relationship with their Sindhi heritage and the adaptations that occurred in diaspora, further demonstrating the variety among Sindhis in Lucknow. Although most of the younger retailers referred to the Hari Om Mandir, they seldom, if ever, visited the institution themselves. Some did not visit religious sites generally, while others were very active in non-Sindhi activities in Lucknow. Such varied degrees of participation, however, were not unique to Sindhis, as some young and middle-aged Indian men were active devotees, often of Hanuman, while many focused on their careers and delegated religious elements to their wives and mothers.

Dinesh Manglani, an operator of his family's provisions store in Hazratganj, the more formal shopping district in Lucknow, centered his religious sensibilities outside the Sindhi community. Although he stated that he visited the Hari Om Mandir, he made no assertions about the

frequency of his visits, and I never saw him there. In contrast, everyday he wore an orange mark on his forehead that he received at the Hanuman temple across the main street from his store. More significant for him, however, was his personal guru, Asharam Bapu. He asserted, "I took Guru-Mantra personally from Asharam Bapu three years ago. It has made the biggest difference in my life." Asharam was Sindhi, but unlike the gurus described in chapter 3, he did not focus on his Sindhi heritage in a significant way. He televised his discourses across India and attracted both Sindhi and non-Sindhi followers.

The shrine and posters in Manglani's store reflected the broader commitments of Manglani and others in his family. A photo of Asharam sat on the top of the small wall shrine that contained pictures of several Hindu deities and his family's guru, Shri Keshav. The wall behind the counter also displayed several images of Hindu deities, a poster of Guru Nanak from the Hari Om Mandir's 1999 Nanak Jayanti program, and another image of Keshav. These elements corresponded to the common Sindhi understanding of Hindu traditions, even though Manglani never emphasized Nanak specifically.

When I first asked Manglani about Keshav, he suggested that I visit the Hari Om Mandir where they could tell me about Sindhi religious figures. When I protested that Keshav was not pictured there, he spoke with me briefly, distinguishing between Keshav as the family guru and Asharam as his personal guru. In contrast, Manglani's elderly uncle, who operated a similar store in another retail area in Lucknow, followed Keshav personally. This uncle asserted that he seldom visited Keshav's ashram, now in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, because of his duties in the shop. This uncle also visited the Hari Om Mandir on Cheti Chand to express his devotion to Jhule Lal. Although Dinesh Manglani's emphasis on Asharam demonstrated a personal shift away from the family's traditions and his Sindhi heritage, on a daily basis he was more actively religious than his uncle, thus departing from the stereotype of the older generations being more religious.

The experience of diaspora apparently accentuated the decreasing emphasis on Sindhi traditions in the younger generations of this family, though in a slightly different way than what Gurnani had explained. If most Sindhi Hindus had not emigrated from Sindh, Dinesh Manglani probably would have had more contact with Keshav's shrine and his successors because their ashram was close to the family's home in Sindh. This increased contact might have fostered a stronger personal connection that would have been more similar to his uncle's stated commitment to Keshav. Since Keshav's successors had settled in another part of India after Partition, the physical separation meant that it was much easier for Dinesh Manglani to focus on elements that he encountered in the broader society

of Lucknow, Hanuman and Asharam. In contrast to Gurnani, Manglani did not express the personal tensions surrounding his selection of practices, though his confidence in representing Sindhi traditions was clearly limited.

Another family of smaller-scale retailers, the Chandanis, demonstrated a different sense of distance from their Sindhi heritage that the experience of migration, and even multiple migrations, exacerbated. Deepak Singh, my research assistant, arranged an interview with one of the adult sons in the family, Aju, who operated a small clothing boutique in a middle-class market in the Trans-Gomti area. Aju Chandani gave halting answers to my questions about religious traditions in general and Sindhi practices more specifically, all of which clearly held little interest for him. Apparently feeling a need to justify his lack of interest in religious elements to me, he specifically explained that he knew little about Sindhi traditions because his family did not discuss life in Sindh and that he seldom participated in Sindhi and non-Sindhi religious events owing to the demands of his shop. When I asked about attending the Hari Om Mandir, he even attempted to inflate his participation, asserting, "I have been once. Not once, we go time to time." The increased frequency in his self-correction coincided with a shift to plural pronouns, suggesting that he was counting the visits of other family members with his own.

Aju Chandani explicitly related that his mother was more concerned with their Sindhi heritage than he was. Despite his denial that they discussed life in Sindh, he later explained, "My mom is very keen to go to the Sindhi festivals and take us over there and show us what it's all about." As he characterized those visits as educational trips at the behest of his mother, rather than acts of devotion, he confirmed his limited interest in both religious practices and Sindhi activities. In terms of language, his mother again was the basis for maintaining their heritage. Family members sometimes spoke with her in Sindhi and always conversed in Hindi with each other. He further explained that his Hindi was much better than his Sindhi.

When our conversation shifted from Sindhi elements to Aju Chandani's time in Lagos, Nigeria, he became much more energized. When he was 18 years old, he moved to Lagos to work with his brother-in-law and sister in a successful import business. He returned to Lucknow after ten years, when "things went berserk" in Lagos. He asserted, "There were lots of Sindhis there. We celebrated all the festivals there, Durga Puja, Holi. I would go to temple with my brother-in-law there." His wistful characterization of his time in Lagos, including periodically visiting a Hindu temple, contrasted sharply with his lack of interest in Sindhi traditions and religious activities in Lucknow. I sensed that his disappointment in his situation after returning

to India, as well as the upheavals of multiple migrations, diminished his interest in such activities. His assertions clearly demonstrated the sometimes tenuous position of Sindhis as diasporic traders, whose success remained vulnerable to changes in political circumstances in places where they were foreigners, and the potential impact of this tenuous position on their cultural interests.

Aju Chandani characterized his two brothers as more interested in religious issues than he was. He respected his older brother Mukesh, who regularly visited temples, performed prayers meticulously each day, and cared for the joint family. In contrast, he characterized his younger brother Sunil as being too religiously minded, implying some resentment that this brother traveled to various religious centers instead of contributing to the family.

When I randomly stopped at Mukesh Chandani's small shop in Hazratganj, without immediately realizing the family connection, his appearance confirmed his brother's description of his religious commitments. Being a Tuesday, Mukesh Chandani had an orange mark on his forehead from his visit to one of the Hanuman temples. Like his brother, though, he expressed a lack of knowledge about Sindhi culture and suggested that I visit shops in Aminabad Park, where many Sindhis established their businesses, because they would know more about Sindhi traditions. Sunil, the youngest brother, in contrast, went beyond the typical reticence of younger Sindhis; he explicitly denounced his Sindhi heritage when he declined my request for an interview. Although the reasons behind his rejection of his Sindhi identity were unclear because he declined to discuss matters further, his assertions dramatically demonstrated the rejection of Sindhi culture among some Sindhis.

On a visit to Aminabad Park's bustling market, which, as Mukesh Chandani suggested, had many Sindhi and Punjabi shops, another young Sindhi merchant Krishan Gidwani talked about the paucity of activities in the city in contrast to his grandparents' experiences in Sindh, where the community was not so dispersed. However, he ultimately expressed his disinterest in Sindhi issues, which became obstacles to their adaptation to the environment of Lucknow.

Confirming Gurnani's worst fears, Gidwani asserted, "We are just like the Hindus over here. . . . We have been here for about fifty years, so we have adopted Hinduism. There is not much scope for Sindhism. The new generation does not know Sindhi." In using the term "Sindhism" to represent the practices that Sindhis usually followed and that he dismissed as outdated, he treated those practices as a separate religious tradition, implicitly distinct from mainstream Hinduism. Such a differentiation reflected an acceptance of the hegemonic definitions of religious traditions in Lucknow.

As he resisted Sindhi practices, treating Sindhism as a different religion did not threaten his own identification as a Hindu the way that such an assertion would have threatened the Hindu identification of Sindhis at the Hari Om Mandir. On the personal level, these opinions represented a shift from his parents and grandmother who each held ties to elements of Sindhi traditions. His grandmother was very devoted to Guru Nanak, and his parents followed the Vaswani lineage, especially as his mother had attended a Vaswani school in Pune as a child.

Later in our conversation, he intimated the relative importance of business concerns over his grandparents' stories about Sindh, declaring, "My grandparents used to tell us about Sindh, but I have forgotten what they told me. We are involved in business." When my research assistant expressed sadness at the declining knowledge of Sindhi, Gidwani immediately declared that it was a positive sign. "Sindhis are the most flexible people, so we learn whatever the language is where we are." Adaptability, business acumen, and prominent Hindu practices were more relevant to his experiences than "Sindhism."

As these examples of smaller scale Sindhi merchants who were born after Partition demonstrate, generalizations about Sindhis are dangerous. The levels of religious commitment and understanding of Sindhi culture varied within these few examples, though none were actively interested in their Sindhi heritage. While previous chapters referred to Sindhis born after Partition who were active in various Sindhi activities, the older Sindhis who expressed concerns about the viability of Sindhi traditions focused on Sindhis such as these young retailers. Such a limited interest in cultural or religious activities among young and even middle-aged adults is common in many communities. Moreover, the demands of establishing their own businesses were more important for many young Sindhis than Sindhi traditions were. Yet as a minority diasporic community whose practices diverged from the dominant understandings in their new home, the responses of these retailers created an extra burden for the maintenance of a distinct Sindhi heritage.

The Malkani Family

Although the preceding sections generally have confirmed the assertion that older Sindhis participated in Sindhi traditions more than the younger generation, the Malkani family presented an exception. Before Partition, this family migrated to Lucknow, and two family members continued to live in the city during my fieldwork. The experiences and recollections of this brother and sister, both born before Partition, illustrated further the various choices and challenges that Sindhis faced outside of Sindh.

Lakshman Malkani, the oldest son in the family, operated a small, English language publishing house in Lucknow, and his sister, Nina Avasthi, was a retired literature professor from Lucknow University. Both of them discussed aspects of their Sindhi heritage, but neither was active in Sindhi religious or cultural events.

The Malkani family moved to Lucknow in the early 1920s when their father became manager of a cinema that another Sindhi entrepreneur had established in Hazratganj. While Lakshman Malkani was born in Sindh a few years before the family migrated, his siblings were born after the move to Lucknow; therefore, the children as a whole experienced Sindhi culture in limited ways during their childhood. Their parents continued some Sindhi practices, but with only a few Sindhi families in Lucknow at that time, they chose to create a home that largely resembled the culture of Lucknow. Moreover, their parents' voluntary departure from Sindh probably related to a limited emphasis on Sindhi culture, as those deeply committed to a regional heritage would be less likely to migrate with their family voluntarily. Summer visits to Karachi, where their grandparents lived, provided their main childhood experiences of Sindhi culture.

Malkani spoke respectfully about his father's commitment to his children's education, despite having limited resources. Malkani connected this focus to the family's Amil heritage, who generally emphasized education, as opposed to the merchant Bhaiband. Malkani expressed his pride in the achievements of his Amil community as he frequently identified other Amil families in Lucknow. This emphasis on education affected the lives of Malkani and Avasthi significantly, as Malkani published books in English and Avasthi taught in the university. Ironically, Malkani's limited knowledge of Sindhi language and culture partially arose from this Amil emphasis on education and adaptation to the ruling powers, as their father emphasized an English education for all of his children during the British colonial period, instead of focusing on their Sindhi heritage.

Contact with a few Sindhi families and occasional visits to a *gurdwara* were Avasthi's primary memories of Sindhi elements in Lucknow. She remembered her parents visiting the largest *gurdwara* in Lucknow.

> My parents used to go by tonga. My dad would ride a bicycle to work, but when my mom went, they took a tonga to the *gurdwara*. There were no rickshaws then, and we had no car. I was taken occasionally. I enjoyed the *kirtans* a lot, and then I was given the lovely *halva* [i.e., *kara prasad*]. They told me to keep some for my brothers, but I just could not keep it without eating it all.

After their mother died in 1935, their father attended occasionally with another Sindhi couple who became a second set of parents for Avasthi.

Partition heightened the family's connection to Sindh, despite their father's emphasis on assimilating to Lucknow. Their father's generous nature combined with his Sindhi roots to compel him to assist Sindhi refugees by arranging inexpensive housing for some of them. He also helped organize Kasturbai Nari Shala and the Harmandir. As their paternal grandmother and several aunts migrated to Lucknow, Partition also brought them more consistent contact with daily aspects of their Sindhi heritage. Avasthi remembered her grandmother insisting on reserving a separate room for the Guru Granth Sahib that she had brought from Karachi, even though the family's apartment was too small for the now extended family. Avasthi would open and close the Guru Granth Sahib whenever her grandmother was away from Lucknow, reciting some of the prayers that her grandmother had taught her, though Avasthi never learned to read the text.

Despite her limited exposure to Sindh, Avasthi as an adult appreciated other elements of Sindhi culture, especially food and dress. As she preferred the Sindhi style of butchering mutton, Avasthi went out of her way to buy mutton from a butcher in the Chowk because that butcher had learned to prepare it in the Sindhi style. A visit in a Sindhi home across from this butcher shop aroused a strong recollection of her childhood visits to Karachi.

> I felt like I had walked into a typical Sindhi house, like when I visited my grandmother in Karachi. I saw a woman rolling papad, just like my grandmother would. And they were laying them out to dry on a charpoi, with jute twine for the bed, to let the sun and air dry them more quickly, just like my grandmother and aunts did in Karachi. Then I saw an old lady come into the room wearing a skirt just like grandmothers who were not widows used to wear in Sindh. It was a long heavy skirt, like Gujarati skirts, and it was red and had a black print on it.

Avasthi's assertions demonstrated the ways that other Sindhi families recreated Sindh in Lucknow after Partition and how the issues of food and dress generated nostalgia for her childhood experiences in Sindh.

Avasthi continued one Sindhi tradition, the ritualized preparation of *halva*. To bestow blessings on special occasions, the *halva* was prepared while concentrating on certain verses of the Guru Granth Sahib, which placed this ritualized activity within Sikh traditions, according to the dominant understandings. When one of Avasthi's aunts explained this procedure for making *halva* to her right before Avasthi got married, Avasthi remembered seeing her grandmother mumbling something in the kitchen before distributing the freshly made *halva*. At the time of our interview,

Avasthi had just made *halva* in this fashion to celebrate her adult son's birthday.

In an ironic twist, Avasthi's image of pre-Partition Lucknow resembled many Sindhis' descriptions of the communal harmony in pre-Partition Sindh.

> Had Partition not happened, we would have lived in amity. We had such wonderful relations before Partition. Many friends were Muslim, and some were Christian. We were not aware that we were different, and no one discussed the different rituals. We did not think anything of it. When I went to a Hindu friend's house, I *namasted* the parents [traditional Hindu greeting with folded hands]. When I went to a Muslim friend's, I would say, "*adab*" [Arabic term for politeness, used as a respectful greeting]. When I went to a Christian's home, I would say, "Good morning" or "Good evening." They were Indian Christians, but we would always speak English with them. It was as natural for me to go to a Christian church for a funeral with a friend as to go to the cremation grounds.

Her representation suggested that the prominent understandings of religious borders hardened after Partition, which matched the descriptions of many Sindhis and non-Sindhis about Lucknow. Her reflections countered the uniqueness of Sindh's harmonious relations that several Sindhis in Lucknow highlighted. Frustrations with the current situation and nostalgia for their respective pre-Partition homes combined to influence these differing recollections.

With the family emphasis on assimilation, both Malkani and Avasthi married outside the Sindhi community. Avasthi spoke with a tinge of regret that her son knew little about his Sindhi heritage. She could not have created a Sindhi home because she knew so little about Sindhi traditions. Moreover, the family home followed the practices of her husband's family from Uttar Pradesh. Malkani married a Punjabi woman, and she set the tone for their family's culture.

Though neither Avasthi nor Malkani participated regularly in Sindhi religious activities, they were not isolated from the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib for marking life events. By continuing the ritualized preparation of *halva* for special occasions, Avasthi brought the Guru Granth Sahib into her family's traditions. Malkani regularly attended the annual death anniversary for the businessman who brought Malkani's father to Lucknow, which included a *path* of the Guru Granth Sahib in a Punjabi *gurdwara*.

The differences between Malkani's and Avasthi's representations reflected gender differences within their progressive family that provided an English education to a daughter in the 1940s. Avasthi focused on issues

related to the domestic sphere, including food and cultural symbols. In contrast, Malkani emphasized issues outside the home, such as the divisions between Amil and Bhaiband, welfare institutions, and education. Although they took pride in their Sindhi heritage, their commitment to Sindhi traditions differed greatly from the emphases of many other Sindhis born before Partition, possibly reflecting their long-term immersion in Lucknow, their parents' emphasis on assimilation, and their marriages to non-Sindhis.

The Balani Family

Shankar and B. S. Balani, and their preteen son, lived in a comfortable gated neighborhood in Lucknow and operated several upscale jewelry stores around Hazratganj. In contrast to the typical assumptions and the examples of the young Sindhi retailers, the Balanis, along with Shankar's brother Anand who lived in Mumbai, were all born after Partition and took significant pride in their Sindhi heritage. In their self-representations, they especially emphasized the significant position of their family among Sindhis historically. The Balanis also participated in some Sindhi institutions, although their participation was not as frequent as that of many older Sindhis. Their familial pride appeared to be one factor that fostered the continued emphasis on Sindhi traditions among family members born after Partition, but the unusual physical relation to Sindh of the two brothers and their parents clearly influenced some of their attitudes. Their emphasis on Sindhi traditions, however, was not the only feature of their representation of themselves, as they balanced their Sindhi heritage with their self-representation as modern, rational individuals.

Shankar Balani's mother grew up in Lucknow in one of the Sindhi families who built a successful clothing retail business in the city before Partition. Reversing the typical Sindhi Hindu Partition story, she defied the border created at Partition when she moved from Lucknow to Pakistan in 1954 to marry Shankar's father. The border drawn at Partition did not discourage a favorable match between the prominent Sindhi family in Lucknow and the Balanis in Sindh. After her husband's death, she returned to Lucknow in the early 1990s and was living with Shankar and B. S. Balani during my fieldwork.

Shankar Balani highlighted the prominence of his father's family among Sindhis before Partition. To buttress his various assertions about their position as Sindhi leaders, he loaned me a book that honored his great-great-grandfather, Vishandas, who promoted social reforms in Sindh and taught Vedantic and Sufi ideas. Reflecting the variety of Sindhi traditions, Vishandas also sponsored the publication of spiritual books,

including an Urdu translation of the Qur'an (Soomro 1997, 47, 55, 72, 37–38). Shankar Balani's great-grandfather had been a leader in Karachi and had represented the Hindu minority of Sindh in the Indian Assembly (Jotwani 2000, 73). According to the family lore, Shankar Balani's grandfather refused a position in Nehru's cabinet to remain in Sindh until all Sindhi Hindus were safe.

Because of their mother's reverse migration, Shankar and his brother, Anand, were the only Sindhi Hindus of their generation, among the many whom I met, who lived in Lucknow but had been born in Pakistan. Shankar, however, barely discussed that element of his life. According to B. S. Balani, Shankar's mother sent him to school in India at a young age to separate him from some friends whom she found unsuitable, so his memories of Sindh were limited, except for trips to visit his parents as an adult. Anand, however, returned to Sindh for college after going to school in India. Following his graduation, Anand moved to Mumbai where he and his wife worked as gemologists. During my fieldwork, they frequently visited Lucknow to help B. S. and Shankar open a new store.

Instead of emphasizing his birth in Sindh, Shankar distinguished himself from other Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow by highlighting his trips to Sindh as an adult. This selective emphasis may reflect his distance from early childhood memories or sensitivity about being born in Pakistan, based on the contemporary strained relationship between India and Pakistan. Whatever the reason, both Shankar and B. S. took great pride in showing me their snapshots from their 1985 trip to visit Shankar's mother, with Shankar specifically declaring that no other Sindhis in Lucknow could show me pictures such as those.

Their representation of these trips demonstrated another dynamic of the Sindhi diaspora. Even though, as a part of his modern self-representation, he explained that his family did not "show" their religiousness so much by participating in regular Sindhi *satsangs,* they were truer Sindhis than others because they had seen the homeland since Partition. Such a claim is only understandable within the context of forced migration. While some Sindhis, such as the followers of Chandu Ram, crossed the border regularly, many Sindhis, such as Daswani from chapter 1, experienced it as a physical barrier between them and their ancestral lands that they could only defy ideologically. Shankar had crossed that border physically, and he had the photos to prove it.

Unlike her husband, B. S. Balani grew up in a Sindhi family in Kanpur, a major city in Uttar Pradesh. She characterized her family as fairly progressive.

> My parents were pretty open. Some say you cannot send an unmarried daughter alone overseas, but my *bua*, my father's sister, went to the US by

> herself in the Experiment in International Living, and then I went to Europe by myself. Had they stayed in Pakistan, they would have been extremely conservative and backward.

Her family had also embraced marriages to non-Sindhis, including an English Christian. She contrasted these liberal attitudes toward women to other Sindhi families in Kanpur and Lucknow who were "still backward." Nevertheless, her family maintained a variety of Sindhi traditions. Her grandmother kept a Guru Granth Sahib and various Hindu deities in the family's household shrine. When her grandmother was not there, B. S. opened and closed the Guru Granth Sahib, reciting the verses that she had memorized because she could not read Gurmukhi. Her parents also venerated Sadhu Vaswani and visited pilgrimage sites at Tirupati and Shirdi.

B. S. Balani's representation of her family correlated with the ways she and Shankar presented themselves as progressive Sindhis. She downplayed the importance of attendance at ritualized activities, asserting, "The thought and feeling was there, but no show," much like Shankar Balani's declaration that his family does not "show our religion so much." In this regard, they both emphasized charity over religious events. At the end of Navratri, B. S. Balani preferred to take special treats to an orphanage for girls instead of performing the traditional feeding of seven girls. She also described how her mother-in-law fed children at an orphanage on the death anniversary of her husband instead of feeding Brahmins. When Shankar mentioned the Hari Om Mandir, he asserted that his maternal grandfather founded it as a religious and charitable organization. He continued to highlight specifically the beneficence of the institution, asserting, "Sindhis have many charitable institutions that Punjabis don't have. The hall of the Mandir is given free to anyone for condolence meetings; *puja* [ritual for worship] and all is given free of cost. You don't have to be Sindhi to use it." The contrast with Punjabis was not uncommon among Sindhis, who wanted to emphasize their community's superiority to another prominent community that Partition had affected deeply.

He further explained that he had served on the managing committee at the Hari Om Mandir, but he had to resign because of time commitments. When I asked him about attending the Mandir, he referred to various festivals and tacked on a reference to the weekly *satsang*. The only time that I saw the Balanis at the temple was the final morning of Nanak Jayanti, when Shankar served food in the *langar*. B. S. arrived later, expressing her desire to avoid the earlier crowds at the festivities.

Their discussion of religious activities and social values incorporated a rationalism and progressiveness that B. S. Balani contrasted with the backwardness of some Sindhis, as she did in her description of her family.

She emphasized, for example, the Sindhi and U.P. tradition of abstaining from eating fish in the monsoon season as a means to avoid disturbing the fish during breeding. When I asked if this fast connected to Jhule Lal, she explained that expressing ideas in religious terms helped those who were not educated, but those who were knowledgeable realized the fuller explanation. B. S. Balani also, on several occasions, highlighted the progressiveness of her marriage. In contrast to the division of labor in many Sindhi families, they operated the businesses together, making mutual decisions. Although she drew distinctions between herself and other Sindhis in Lucknow, she more strongly contrasted these progressive elements with the lives of Sindhis who did not leave Pakistan. She asserted, "Sindhis have become cosmopolitan, thanks to Partition" and "[Sindhis in Pakistan] still have the old values and mindset." The appreciation for the changes that Partition brought distinguished her assertions from the mournful nostalgia for the homeland of some Sindhis. This distinction in part developed out of her experiences visiting contemporary Sindh, as opposed to holding an idealized view of the harmony of Sindh.

She also emphasized her anticommunal and nonfanatical position, asserting, "I have a lot—a few—some Muslim friends here, as long as they keep their religion to themselves and I keep mine, no fanaticism." Her shifting description of the number of her Muslim friends suggested that she was concerned to portray a sufficient number of relationships, without exaggerating, to support her self-representation as being noncommunal. The qualification about keeping religion private reflected the prominent understanding of distinct borders dividing traditions that make relationships tenuous. She made no mention of participating in each other's festivals, a practice that some Sindhis and non-Sindhis followed in Lucknow.

Despite representing themselves as rejecting an emphasis on rituals, the Balanis followed particular practices that reflected the significance of ritualized activities for them. On Diwali, the entire family performed *pujas* at the shop and at home and lit the house with *diyas.* For Navratri, B. S. fasted for nine days, and the entire household abstained from meat and alcohol. Though Shankar downplayed his religiosity, B. S. asserted that he prayed every morning at their household shrine, and Anand referred to his brother as a devotee of Hanuman. In a later interview, Shankar emphasized his openness to various traditions, explaining that he frequently read the Bible in the chapel at his boarding school when he was young.

Further highlighting their inclusive approach, B. S. emphasized, among other elements, their visit to Sufi *dargahs* during their trips to Sindh. This emphasis also reinforced their characterization of Shankar's ancestors as followers of Sufis. She specifically mentioned visiting the *dargah* of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, the Muslim Sufi whose *urs* Rochal Das' followers

began to celebrate. However, when I asked Shankar's mother about visiting shrines in Sindh, she mentioned only visiting Jhule Lal's birthplace. When Shankar specifically mentioned Lal Shahbaz, his mother unequivocally denied it, listing instead two Hindu sites. When I directly asked about Lal Shahbaz's *dargah,* she repeated her denial and, with a scowl, declared, "That is a Muslim *dargah.*" Shankar Balani's mother wanted to maintain a distinct border between Hindu and Muslim practices that reflected the border she crossed when she moved to Pakistan for her marriage. Whatever her attitudes before marriage, she clearly had a distaste for Muslims that her experiences among the Hindu minority of Sindh fostered. A few weeks later when I spoke with B. S. again, she clearly remembered all of them going to the *dargah* of Lal Shahbaz. Shankar then explained by characterizing his mother as a "staunch Hindu," which apparently encompassed both her active participation in the ritualized activities of a Radhasoami *satsang* in Lucknow as well as her concern to distinguish between Islamic and Hindu sites.[2] Whoever held the better memory, the two generations clearly represented themselves and their community differently.

Anand revealed further the complexities of identification and the impact of experiences in post-Partition Sindh. He represented himself as being religiously aware though not deeply committed to any particular group. He continued the representation of the family as rejecting the show of religion, asserting, "Our family does not ring bells to get God's attention. I believe God is in our hearts, so why disturb him by ringing bells?" He further presented himself as open to a variety of traditions, asserting that the portions of the Bible, the Gita, and the Qur'an that he had read sounded similar to him. When I contrasted that position with his brother's characterization of their mother as a "staunch Hindu," he defensively stated that he was a staunch Hindu himself. He then distinguished between his feelings when involved with other people and when reflecting privately, and he later agreed that his mother would not read the Qur'an. In the context of his descriptions of being violently attacked as a Hindu in Pakistan, this ambiguous statement implied a private reverence for various traditions and a stronger communalism in the public sphere where he had experienced threats from Muslims.

In the course of our conversations, the Balanis made various generalized representations of Sindhi traditions that both reflected Sindhi redefinitions and the prominent definitions in Lucknow. B. S. Balani's initial representation of Sindhis drew on a childhood memory. When she was nine or ten, she had heard a professor say, "Sindhis' religion is like Hindus, they believe in the Guru Granth Sahib like Sikhs, they dress like Christians, and their language is like Muslims." This statement had stuck in her memory because it helped her understand the inclusiveness of

Sindhis, further illustrating that even Sindhi children in diaspora experience the tensions between Sindhi and non-Sindhi definitions of religions. The professor's statement, as she presented it, placed Sindhi connections with Hindus in the forefront, relating it to the broadest category through an undefined realm of "religion." In contrast, the Sikh element focused on their belief in a single sacred text, which would appear "religious" by most definitions. The statement relegated Christian and Muslim components to a sphere that people typically define as sociocultural. In this way, the statement could be interpreted to reflect the assertion that Sikhs are Hindu, although many non-Sindhis would have connected the reference to the Guru Grant Sahib as incorporating another religion into their practices. In a subsequent interview, she highlighted the Hindu identification of Sindhis, asserting that Sindhi culture "is Hinduism, basically." Yet, even in this statement, using the word "basically" qualifies the identification because the hegemonic definitions created uncertainty about it.

B. S. Balani later provided a slightly different explanation as she addressed the family's participation in elements associated with Hindu and Sikh traditions,

> My grandmother read the Guru Granth Sahib. The only difference between Sindhis and Sikhs is that Sindhis believe in the Guru Granth Sahib and Nanak, but they don't believe in the Khalsa Panth. They believe more in Guru Nanak, and Sikhs believe more in Guru Gobind Singh.
>
> The only difference from other Hindus is the Sindhi's god comes from a fish, Jhule Lal. They celebrate the same festivals as Hindus do. However, they celebrate Tijri, the festival where wives fast and pray for their husbands, a few weeks before Hindus do.

In these statements, she clearly used the term Sikh to refer to a Khalsa understanding of Sikhism, which fits with the dominant understanding in Lucknow. After distinguishing Sindhis from Khalsa Sikhs, she asserted their similarity to "other Hindus." In the next sentence, though, she actually highlighted one of their differences from "Hindus." As her statements implied, the practices of other Hindus formed the standard for Hindu traditions in Lucknow. Sindhis could never fully meet that standard in Lucknow without losing their distinctiveness, in this case, celebrating Tijri and venerating Nanak.

In our second interview, B. S. Balani made an interesting distinction that similarly revealed the influence of the prominent understandings. She described the institution in Kanpur that her family frequented as similar to the Hari Om Mandir. However, the site in Kanpur was "more of a *gurdwara,* a Sindhi *gurdwara,* a proper *gurdwara.*" When I asked what

"a proper *gurdwara*" was, she categorically stated that it had "no idols." The term "proper" suggested that the Hari Om Mandir, after the addition of *murtis* in the mid-1980s, improperly combined the Guru Granth Sahib and Hindu *murtis.* Such an assertion subscribed to the prominent understandings of Sikh traditions as differing from Hindu traditions and demonstrated the absence of adequate terminology in Lucknow.

The difference between Hindu and Sikh slipped into Shankar's self-representations also. He discussed the two wedding styles among Sindhis, using the Guru Granth Sahib or a *havan,* and asserted that he insisted on a *havan* with an Arya Samaj priest, as did his brother. He then stated, "We are a little too Hindu," thus associating the *havan* with being Hindu, implicitly in contrast to the Guru Granth Sahib. However, he further related the importance of Sikh elements amid their Hinduness, describing how his mother arranged for an *akhand path* of the Guru Granth Sahib before their weddings, "So that everything goes well." As happened repeatedly in these interviews, for this prominent Sindhi family, their family practices collided with the hegemonic understanding of the borders dividing Hindu, Sufi, and Sikh traditions, and they faced difficulties consistently representing their Sindhi traditions as Hindu.

The Rupani Family of Atlanta

A brief consideration of a Sindhi family in Atlanta, Georgia, highlights some of the unique elements concerning these individual Sindhi Hindu experiences in Lucknow as well as elements that may be common to Sindhi Hindus in other contexts. For this purpose, I will look at the practices and representations of one couple, Ram and Satya Rupani, who live in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, and who both work in professional careers. Their two children were completing doctorates at the time of our first interview and no longer lived at home.

Satya grew up around Mumbai, while Ram spent his childhood in a smaller town in the state of Gujarat. However, both traced their family's heritage to Sindh, as their families had emigrated after Partition. Like R. D. Gurnani and the Balanis, Ram and Satya emphasized their Sindhi heritage in their participation in religious activities related primarily to Sindh, which frequently brought together Sindhi Hindus in Atlanta, as well as their participation in an annual international gathering of Sindhis.

The Rupani's home shrine, which occupied a portion of their linen closet between shelves with stacks of towels, expressed a Sindhi understanding of the relationship of various elements. An image of Nanak, which rested at the back of the shelf, connected with Satya's familial traditions. Satya's

parents particularly revered Nanak, and her grandmother kept a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib in her home. Toward the front of the shelf, they had placed small *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan on a miniature couch. Other deities in the shrine included Jhule Lal, Hanuman, Radha-Krishna, and a Shiva lingam. Satya highlighted the Shiva lingam, explaining that, during her youth, she prayed specifically to Lord Shiva to bless her with a happy married life, and she continued to honor Shiva in thanksgiving. Each morning, the couple requested the blessings of the deities in the shrine. Reflecting a typical generational difference that was similar to Sindhis elsewhere, Satya also described how she always encouraged her adult children to take the blessings of the deities before they departed following a visit. She especially wanted her daughter to pray to Shiva, as Satya had, but her daughter was not interested in following that tradition.

Satya and Ram also observed fasts on certain days. These fasts primarily involved abstaining from meat, as they, and many Sindhis, were not vegetarian. These fasts expressed their special devotion to Shiva on Mondays, Hanuman on Tuesdays, and Veeral Bhagavan, a specific manifestation of Vishnu, on Thursdays. They also fasted from meat on full-moon days, which they related to Satya Narayan. Because of the shifting schedule of fasts, at work Satya's American colleagues often asked her, "Is this a vegetarian day or a non-veg day?" Satya's representation of those comments, however, reflected no defensiveness or tension, as she interpreted the question as friendly curiosity. Since their fasting highlighted differences between them and their non-Hindu coworkers, it illustrates a different diasporic challenge than what many Sindhi Hindus experienced in relation to the majority Hindu community in North India.

In addition to the inclusion of Nanak in their home shrine, Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib played a significant role in their religious activities. Since there were no Sindhi institutions in Atlanta, Ram and Satya visited a Punjabi Sikh *gurdwara* in Atlanta every month or so, listening to the devotional music and the readings from the Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi, as well as partaking of the *langar.* More significantly, they assisted in preparing and serving the *langar* occasionally when someone in the Sindhi community, or the Sindhi Sabha of Georgia as a whole, sponsored the Sunday *langar.* Through participation in Sindhi sponsorship, they maintained their relation to the Sindhi community and their heritage, even as they participated in a non-Sindhi *gurdwara.*

In India, both Ram and Satya had grown up going to Sindhi *tikanas* that, like the Hari Om Mandir, included images of Guru Nanak and various Hindu deities along with the Guru Granth Sahib. In fact, Satya asserted that she did not realize that Punjabi Sikh definitions excluded the worship of various Hindu deities until she settled in Atlanta. This

assertion illustrated a significant difference between her experience in a major Sindhi settlement around Mumbai that could be somewhat insular and the experiences of Sindhis as a dispersed minority in Lucknow. It is also possible that her parents shielded her from some of the external pressures that adult Sindhis in Lucknow could not avoid. Having experienced physically the dominant understandings of the separation of Sikh and Hindu traditions after migrating to Atlanta, Satya described the veneration of Guru Nanak and the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib as "really the Sikh religion," though that designation did not cause her to reject those practices of her childhood. Her representations also expressed less of the defensiveness about her continuation of those practices, in contrast to the representations of many Sindhis in Lucknow. This lack of defensiveness resembles her interpretations of questions from coworkers as friendly curiosity, whereas many Sindhis in Lucknow viewed similar questions as more threatening because of the pressure to conform to the broader society.

The Rupanis also participated in the activities of the Sadhu Vaswani Center in Atlanta, including the Sunday evening *satsangs* in the home of a member, which have increased from monthly to weekly gatherings, and the *seva* (service), when members performed acts of generosity such as visiting people in a nursing home or feeding ducks at a park. Within the Vaswani movement, assistance to any living being is considered *seva*. They also attended some of J. P. Vaswani's events when he visited the United States. They participated in several activities whenever Vaswani came to Atlanta and have attended occasionally the more intensive retreats held in New Jersey each summer.

Unlike the veneration of Nanak, participating in the Sadhu Vaswani movement was not something that either Ram or Satya's family had done in India. However, Satya described the benefits that she has experienced from participating in Atlanta, including learning to forgive others and to work with people more easily. She contrasted these practical lessons with her experiences at *gurdwaras,* where she does not understand the recitations and occasional discourses in Punjabi. Therefore, her reasons for participating in the *gurdwaras* (family tradition) and Sadhu Vaswani Center (practical advice) and the impact of those experiences were quite different. Nevertheless, she continued to dedicate time to participate in both events.

As with the special *langars* at *gurdwaras,* the broader Sindhi community often gathered at a range of sites to hold special religious functions. For special events, such as a birth, death, or other significant life event, a Sindhi family may choose to sponsor a ritual and invite the Sindhi Hindu community to participate. The rituals varied from a *langar* or *path* of the Guru Granth Sahib to a special *puja* for a specific deity. Before the *gur-*

dwaras and temples opened in Atlanta, these events were organized in homes. With the current range of non-Sindhi institutions across Atlanta, many Sindhis have organized these special events at a *gurdwara* or the Sri Venkateswara temple. Some Sindhis, nevertheless, choose their home or other public facilities, such as one Sindhi family in Atlanta in 2006 who chose a restaurant to conduct a Satya Narayan Puja to honor their daughter's departure for college. Every few years, the Rupanis themselves sponsored a *path* of the Guru Granth Sahib, thus honoring the traditions of Satya's family, despite the clear appreciation for the assistance through the Vaswani movement. Although they generally organized the *path* in a *gurdwara* in Atlanta, one year they sponsored it in a Sindhi institution in Mumbai while they were visiting.

Beyond these family-sponsored gatherings of Sindhis, the Sindhi Sabha of Georgia sponsored formal community gatherings in the Atlanta area, including the commemoration of Cheti Chand, a Divali gathering, a summer picnic, and an occasional *langar* at a *gurdwara.* These events played a significant role in the experiences of the Rupanis. This organization and its activities were, in fact, so important for the Rupanis that both of them had held volunteer leadership positions in the Sabha.

Their celebration of festivals, however, extended beyond the activities of the Sindhi Sabha. For Guru Nanak's birthday, they typically visited one of the *gurdwaras* and observed the conclusion of the *path* that the Punjabi Sikh community had organized. For T. L. Vaswani's birthday, Satya typically signed the International Meatless Day pledge along with participating in the birthday commemorations. Her only hesitancy to pledge to be meatless came when the date (November 25) happened to coincide with the American Thanksgiving holiday. Since her family would serve meat on Thanksgiving, she did not want to commit to abstain from meat if she might decide to eat meat with her family. Therefore, while their Sindhi heritage was so important that they devoted much time and effort to the community in Atlanta, some of the holidays of the United States, and their attendant traditions, had also become quite significant in their family.

This variety of activities allowed the Rupanis to connect both with their family heritage that they had experienced as children in India and with other Sindhis in Atlanta. Their attendance at the *gurdwara* and sponsorship of a *path* connected them to Satya's family traditions, and their presence and participation in the *langars* sponsored by other Sindhis who similarly emphasized the Guru Granth Sahib or the Sindhi Sabha as a whole integrated their family connections with their community in Atlanta. Participation in events that they did not connect with their childhood directly were important for community and personal growth. When they visited the Shri Venkateswara Temple or rituals organized in

other locations, they did so to participate with and support other Sindhis. The Sadhu Vaswani Center also brought together some of the Sindhis in the area and provided, according to Satya, the most practical advice for personal development. Their commitment to this community was evident in their willingness to drive across Atlanta regularly for these events, sometimes trying to attend multiple events in the same day. Although the culture of Atlanta, and its infrastructure, made these trips more typical among people in Atlanta than they were for most people in Lucknow, the willingness to expend time and resources to attend demonstrated the importance of their community and heritage for the Rupanis and some of the other Sindhis in Atlanta.

Their experience of creating their family traditions in the southern United States presented challenges similar to Gurnani's participation in both Sindhi and non-Sindhi institutions, though with an additional complexity. In the absence of a Sindhi institution, the only way for the Rupanis and other Sindhis to venerate the Guru Granth Sahib outside of their home was to attend a Punjabi-dominated *gurdwara,* where the ritualized activities validated a Khalsa Sikh understanding of religious boundaries. Similarly, when they participated at the Shri Venkateswara temple, they experienced a South Indian ritual scheme that excluded the Guru Granth Sahib. Unlike in Lucknow, even the activities within the Sindhi community, including the Sindhi Sabha's Cheti Chand and the *satsangs* of the Sadhu Vaswani Center, did not actually incorporate in one ritual setting all of the elements that the Rupanis highlighted. Therefore, they never fully experienced the dominant Sindhi understandings as devotees at the Hari Om Mandir and the Shiv Shanti Ashram in Lucknow did. Nevertheless, these ritual experiences were not determinative. Many Sindhis such as the Rupanis continued to express their personal agency as they maintained the various practices that they identified as a part of their heritage, thereby resisting the power of the dominant definitions.

Without a Sindhi institution, however, they faced a more subtle challenge to their distinct identification. As Sindhi Hindus in Atlanta visited these varied sites as a community, sharing their celebration of each other's life events, the activities at these sites reinforced the community connection, rather than their allegiance to the particular temple community or religious institution. However, those sites also, in a way, became uniquely connected to the Sindhi community, even though the Sindhis had limited influence, if any, on the policies of the institutions. Beyond the concern of their precarious position in relation to these institutions, this form of community participation could develop into a challenge to their distinct heritage. When the Sri Venkateswara Temple, with its South Indian form of ritualized activities, became the primary site for the Sindhi community's

temple rituals, those South Indian traditions basically came to symbolize Sindhi Hindu practices, particularly for the younger generations growing up in Atlanta. When the younger generation becomes independent, it is possible that they will find more meaning in a South Indian temple or a Punjabi *gurdwara* than the *tikana* that Satya visited as a child or the Hindu temples that were important in Sindh. Therefore, Sindhi Hindu traditions for the Atlanta community incorporated another layer of ritualized activities that, perhaps, marginalized activities common to their ancestors in Sindh.

Ritualized Activities, Heritage, and the Challenge of Diaspora

All of these individual Sindhis, viewed collectively, highlight some of the variety of attitudes to their Sindhi heritage and the range of activities that existed among Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow and elsewhere. Male and female representatives from pre-Partition and post-Partition generations exhibited both strong religious commitments and nonreligious viewpoints, both deep pride and disinterest in Sindhi traditions. Nevertheless, correlations based on generation (divided in relation to Partition) and gender arose from these examples and the broader sampling of interviews that I conducted.

While those who were born before Partition participated more regularly in Sindhi religious activities, several exceptions existed within this sampling, including Malkani, Avasthi, and the Rupanis. This general trend of greater religiosity among older generations was not unique to Sindhis, as it correlated generally with the Hindu assumption that retirement is a time for greater religious practices. It is possible, however, that their precarious position as a regional minority exacerbated this general trend, as those who still felt economically and socially insecure were less committed to the maintenance of their Sindhi heritage.

Moreover, the older generations among Sindhi Hindus had a much closer connection to the region, as they either lived there or knew age-mates who had migrated from there. This closeness probably increased their interest in Sindhi traditions. As Gurnani stated, the experience of growing up in North India diminished this connection to Sindhi traditions. Generally, an interviewee's generation also correlated with the strength of commitment to their Sindhi heritage. The primary exceptions to the generational designation were the Balani family's pride in their Sindhi-ness and Malkani and Avasthi's lack of participation in Sindhi activities. Unlike most of the

Sindhi Hindus in their generation, the Balani brothers had lived in Sindh, which clearly increased their connection to Sindh and probably raised their level of pride in it. Therefore, perhaps a better point of division is the person's place of birth. Those born in Sindh, such as R. D. Gurnani and Shankar and Anand Balani, were generally more interested in Sindhi issues than those born outside of Sindh, including Avasthi, the Chandani brothers, and Krishan Gidwani. Ram and Satya Rupani were the clearest exception to this, as they were born and grew up outside of Sindh but retained a strong interest in Sindhi elements in Atlanta.

Clearly, other factors affected a person's interest in their regional heritage. Most notably, the exceptions to the generational differences often related to family dynamics, as the Balani family historically maintained a deep commitment to Sindhi issues while the Malkani family voluntarily left Sindh before Partition and emphasized assimilation in Lucknow. Moreover, marriage outside the Sindhi community often limited the relation to Sindhi traditions, as seen in the cases of Avasthi and Malkani. This correlation is natural, on one level, because a willingness to marry outside the community reflects a lower commitment to the community in general. This correlation, however, is not absolute, as another Sindhi, Jaya Bhambhwani, had married a coworker from Bihar even though she was interested in Sindhi traditions before marriage. Her marriage outside of the community arose from a concern that outweighed her Sindhi heritage, a desire to continue her professional work as an educated, modern woman. When her family failed to create a match with a Sindhi who accepted those ideas, she remained single until she found someone who accepted her independence. Though her marriage did not develop out of a lack of interest in her Sindhi heritage, it still resulted in a reduced focus on Sindhi traditions. As this example illustrates, a focus on the general correlations too easily overshadows the complex motivations that underlay the decisions of these Sindhi individuals.

Although the sampling of women in my interviews limits my conclusions concerning gender, the interview material provisionally confirmed my observation of the predominance of women among the devotees at Sindhi institutions. While B. S. Balani and Nina Avasthi did not represent themselves as outwardly religious, women were typically responsible for the maintenance of the Guru Granth Sahib in a home. For example, both B. S. Balani and Avasthi as teenagers served the Guru Granth Sahib whenever their grandmothers were not present. Similarly, Avasthi visited the local *gurdwara* with her parents while her brothers remained at home. This gendered division was certainly not unique to Sindhis, as many families in India and elsewhere have placed the responsibility for maintaining religious traditions and devotional activities on women. This contrasts with the dominance of men in the leadership of institutions such as the Hari

Om Mandir and the Shiv Shanti Ashram. In Atlanta, however, women have served as president of the Sindhi Sabha.

While these interviewees illustrated the individuality that Sindhis continued to express, one element that united most of these individuals was the difficulty that they had in representing Sindhi traditions. As they developed their own understandings and their own forms of ritualized traditions, their self-representations revealed the continued influence of the dominant definitions. The prominent understandings, which considered non-Sindhi traditions as normative, forced Sindhis to alternate between representing their heritage as reflecting what was truly Hindu and implying that Sindhi traditions were uniquely idiosyncratic. However, this difficulty was less apparent among the Rupanis, as well as other Sindhis in Atlanta. While some slippage between Sindhi understandings and the dominant definitions appeared in some interviews in Atlanta, the defensiveness that made such slippages glaringly apparent in Lucknow was generally absent. The context of Lucknow, with the communalized atmosphere at the time of my fieldwork, seemed to exacerbate the concerns among Sindhis that their identification be respected.

The defensiveness among Sindhis in Lucknow was not universal. Sindhi explanations of their heritage ranged from the dismissiveness of Krishan Gidwani's term "Sindhism" to Anand Balani's defensiveness about being a "staunch Hindu" like his mother. R. D. Gurnani's discussion about Sindhi marriage rituals suggested a concern to present his community as Hindu, despite the variety in his personal practices. For others, the defensiveness became most apparent when statements focused specifically on the labels applied to the interviewee's family and / or specific practices. Much like Shankar Balani's mother's response to the question about Lal Shahbaz's shrine, after denouncing Muslim treachery in Partition, Daswani (see chapter 1) referred to his father's devotion to a Sufi, including Daswani's placement of this figure in his home shrine. However, he clearly recoiled from identifying his father as a Sufi.

The shifts that arose within these defensive responses unintentionally highlighted the liminality of Sindhi Hindus generally, which Sindhis themselves understood quite well. The issue of language, combined with the physical experience of the hegemonic definitions during their participation in multiple non-Sindhi religious sites, reinforced the incompatibility of traditions commonly understood as Hindu, Sufi, and Sikh. In their varied responses to that incompatibility, the agency and vitality within the Sindhi Hindu community was clear. As in the diverse institutions and guru movements, Sindhi Hindus found a variety of ways as individuals to recreate their Sindhi heritage and establish new understandings in multiple diasporic contexts.

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Conclusion: Understanding Differences

My original intention in studying the religions of India was to analyze the interactions between Hindus and Muslims. Although I had read various references to Hindu and Muslim participation in each other's festivals, I found the analysis of these dynamics in contemporary India very limited. On the basis of those accounts, I had formed an assumption that the boundary separating Muslims and Hindus was clear, yet quite permeable. When I first encountered Sindhi Hindu elements at the Jhule Lal Mandir at Sindhi Ghat in Lucknow, what caught my eye was the inscription in Devanagiri (the primary script for Sanskrit and Hindi) and Nastaliq (the primary script for Arabic, Urdu, and Sindhi). Not being familiar with Jhule Lal or the Sindhi language at that time, I assumed that the inscription in two languages signified a site that attracted both Hindus and Muslims, a clear example of the harmonious interactions that I wanted to research.

When I began asking about the site, several acquaintances directed me toward the Hari Om Mandir. I entered the Sunday morning *satsang* looking for an example of Hindu-Muslim harmony and found a community that defied a variety of borders as they incorporated the Guru Granth Sahib, Sufi *pirs,* deities, and the Bhagavad Gita. When I met a few Sindhis, their idealization of the harmony of pre-Partition Sindh reinforced my impression of a community that represented religious harmony. Because of my assumptions, I anticipated that research on this community would enable me to investigate the dynamics of religious harmony and fluid practices in the midst of fixed borders in a contemporary example of lived religions.

The assumptions that I brought to the study of Sindhi Hindus related to the work of scholars who have highlighted the presence of porous borders in Indian religions, often contrasting that with the assumption of impermeable boundaries in much European and American thought.[1] As I began interviewing Sindhis in Lucknow more formally, I realized that my assumptions, and these perspectives on which they were based, did not promote a clear understanding of the experiences of Sindhi Hindus, who

often drew sharp lines between various religions. In fact, the concept of porous borders assumed that Sindhi Hindu practices involved the crossing of clear religious boundaries, which directly dismisses the assertions of many Sindhi Hindus themselves.

This community also did not consistently represent an ideal of religious tolerance or pluralism, as many Sindhis augmented their pride in their Hindu identification by contrasting themselves to non-Hindu communities. Several Sindhis highlighted Hindu tolerance to promote the superiority of Hindu traditions over other religions, while a few specifically expressed negative images of Muslims. My initial failure to understand the dynamics of this community stemmed from my acceptance of particular boundaries between religions and the related assumption that Sindhi Hindus recognized those same boundaries but understood them to operate fluidly in an environment of interreligious harmony. As the reality of this community did not match my expectations, the research became an opportunity to learn more than I ever expected and to rethink my understanding of the borders dividing religions and the formation of communities, cultural practices, and identifications.

The Complexity of Contested Borders

In rethinking the borders and social processes related to Sindhi Hindus and other communities that do not match the common definitions, recognizing both the power of the dominant understandings of religious boundaries and the power to contest those dominant understandings is vital. Numerous examples in the preceding chapters illustrate the various power dynamics of these contested borders. Most obviously, the concern among the leaders of the Harmandir about the legal redefinition of their sacred site demonstrates the power of the dominant definitions to create a shift in a community's self-representations and practices, while the community's refusal to simply accept the dominant understandings illustrates their power of resistance. Both forms of power were also evident in the various ways different guru movements created their Sindhi heritage in a diasporic context informed by the dominant definitions. As the different types of celebrations of Cheti Chand and Nanak Jayanti illustrated, Sindhis in North India often shifted between assertions of a pan-Hindu unity that increasingly conformed to the dominant understandings and a separate Sindhi identification.

The ability to shift between different understandings was important for Sindhi Hindus who wanted to maintain their regional heritage while also connecting to the dominant community. As largely a trading community,

any marginalized identification could have hindered their financial success. Moreover, because of the prominence of Hindu Nationalist ideology in Lucknow during the time of my research, a non-Hindu identification would have separated Sindhi Hindus from the center of national identity in the city. Beyond these various concerns in South Asia, the connotations of the limited vocabulary available for Sindhi Hindus to represent their traditions and the physical experience of different ritual schemes, which all arose out of the power of these dominant definitions, affected Sindhi Hindus in India and beyond, yet these influences never fully determined the formation of Sindhi practices.

The power of these dominant definitions also influenced the images that the community constructed of itself, most notably in their treatment of Nanak. Since common understandings of Sikhism identified Nanak as a primary symbol of a lineage that most non-Sindhis recognized as a separate religion from Hinduism, various Sindhi Hindu communities balanced representations of Nanak with references to other elements recognized as Hindu, including Jhule Lal as a fellow incarnation of Vishnu and the Tulsi Katha as a story related to Vishnu that coincided with the celebration of Nanak Jayanti. As Sikh claims to Nanak corresponded to the dominant definitions, Jhule Lal became the primary community symbol in public, even though Nanak had a deeper historical relationship to Sindhi Hindus generally than Jhule Lal did.

Obviously, this presentation of competing powers is grossly oversimplified. The dominant definitions have never been universally agreed upon. Conceptions of Hinduism vary from a chauvinism that rejects other religions as inferior to an assertion that all religions reach the same goal, not to mention the plethora of Hindu reform movements and sects that assert competing understandings of Hinduism. This diversity, as well as the plethora of practices among the Hindu majority in India, further highlights the limitations of the power of any dominant definition of a religion. Nevertheless, many Sindhi Hindus clearly maintained a sense that their practices diverged from a standard, and they both felt pressure to conform to that standard and feared that they would be absorbed into that standard form.

Similarly, the power of Sindhi Hindus to define their own boundaries and establish their own practices is quite complicated. Not only is this power limited by the power of the dominant definitions, but the power of alternative communities like Sindhi Hindus is also diffused. Each group and each individual, as seen in the earlier chapters, constructs their own formation of practices and their own ways of defining Sindhi Hindu heritage and Sindhi culture more generally. Therefore, it is not one power but multiple centers of power that, at times, compete between themselves over their understandings of their heritage. The dialectic of dominant power

versus peripheral power can be taken to ever increasing levels of differentiation. Besides pitting mainstream Hindus versus regional Hindu communities such as the Sindhis, you can see a similar process occurring between the composite Sindhi Hindu image and the views within a specific community of Sindhis, as each guru movement in chapter 3 developed their practices in their own ways that, in some respects, diverged from the dominant understanding of Sindhi traditions. Within each local community, the same dynamic exists, as individuals differ from the assertions and formations of the local community or organization, much as the practices of R. D. Gurnani and Shankar and B. S. Balani differed in various ways from the formation in the Hari Om Mandir.

The complexities of the power of alternative communities (or individuals) to define their own boundaries and practices extend in other directions. None of these individuals or communities have a fixed, primordial definition of their practices. Despite assertions of authenticity and tradition, all communities alter their practices and their representations of them. This process of alteration, however, is more clearly evident in minority diasporic communities such as Sindhi Hindus, who must constantly negotiate between their constructions of tradition and the broader interests and issues within both their specific community and the broader society. Through the process of development and the practical logistics of life, asymmetry exists between the constantly changing practices and representations. When a community adjusts its practices, their representations often shift more slowly to begin to match the change in practices. For example, as Cheti Chand became a major occasion to celebrate Sindhi culture in practice, the figure of Jhule Lal appears to have increased in importance in their representations. Conversely, a shift in representations, as when Sindhi Hindus focused on their connections to other Hindus, can facilitate a change in practices, such as encouraging practices that correlate with the understandings of other Hindus. Therefore, the process of developing practices and reformulating self-representations remain connected to the other, though they do not correspond exactly.

As these various levels of complexity within Sindhi Hindu conceptions and the dominant definitions illustrate, the need to move beyond labels and textbook definitions is obvious. Accepting a particular definition of a religion often fossilizes that religion, ignoring the continual recreations of any tradition and the resulting contestation surrounding any definition. As my expectations did not match their assertions, I became personally aware of the implications of preexisting definitions that can lead people to misinterpret a community by forcing them to fit within existing preconceptions. The analysis of differences requires openness to the existence of such differences without prejudging them as aberrant for being different,

and labels and standardized definitions inherently contain the bases for those prejudgments.

Our facility with language relies on the use of labels that often convey connotations of the dominant definitions, whether they are intended or not. When people, whether Sindhi or non-Sindhi, seriously contend with the contested nature of religious boundaries and labels, the commonly accepted, simplified terms no longer represent communities adequately. The Sindhi Hindus, especially in Lucknow, experienced such challenges, as illustrated in the debates surrounding the appropriate term for the Hari Om Mandir and the disagreements over using Sufi terms, whose connotations in Lucknow differed from what the Sindhis intended. The ethnic dynamics of language exacerbated these challenges, as appropriate terms in Sindhi were not useful in communicating with non-Sindhis and the prominence of Arabic terms in Sindhi traditions and literature held strong associations with Islam in North India.

When a person uses a label such as Hindu, Sufi, or Sikh, or Sindhi, Punjabi, or Indian, understanding what they intend by that shorthand facilitates accurate communication. Interrogating the specifics behind a person's use of such labels is central to acknowledging the contested nature of religious boundaries without assuming that a particular label references the dominant definition. Whether Hindu or Sikh or neither, whether experts or common people, it is imperative also for the speaker to clarify what they mean by those terms. Throughout this study, I have struggled, like Sindhi Hindus have, to represent their practices without automatically validating the dominant definitions. I have worked to be as specific as possible about which understanding of Hinduism or which specific element (e.g., Guru Granth Sahib, *murtis,* or *pirs*) I am discussing. While such solutions are far from perfect, they create some balance between the specificity of each particular definition and the over-generalized labels such as Hindu, Sufi, and Sikh.

Syncretism and Contested Definitions

Recognizing the complicated nature of the contestation surrounding definitions of religions and cultures adds new dimensions to the use of the term syncretism, or similar terms such as hybridity or creolization. A simple application of such terms to the practices of Sindhi Hindus, as mentioned earlier, disregards the assertions of Sindhi Hindu themselves and valorizes the dominant definitions of religious boundaries. However, when the variety of definitions of religions is considered, the examples of the creations

of Sindhi Hindu traditions in diaspora add another layer to the discussion of syncretism. Moving forward from recent redefinitions of syncretism as a deliberate strategy of "blending" that contrasts to anti-syncretism, a strategy of "boundary maintenance" (Shaw and Stewart 1994; Kraft 2002:149), Sindhi Hindus have at times consciously debated and enacted a blending, according to the dominant Sindhi understandings, of practices associated not with different religions but with different regional forms within one religion, Hinduism. At the Hari Om Mandir, the increasing emphasis on Hindi music, the Bhagavad Gita, and Hanuman, combined with the centrality of the Guru Granth Sahib, Ardas, and Jhule Lal, illustrate particularly well the ways their developing practices blended the emphases and ritualized activities of Sindhi Hinduism with North Indian understandings of Hinduism.

Although using syncretism in this manner resists the dominant definition of a homogenized religion, the difficulty of assuming a single, pure form corrupted by outside elements remains, simply on a more specific level. The supposed "purity" that is lost in such a description is the purity of what some Sindhi Hindus identify as their regional heritage. As with the oversimplification of the competing powers discussed earlier, the danger in this approach is the loss of the contestation within Sindhi and North Indian regional heritages. Furthermore, such a broadened view of syncretism returns us to the question of what would not involve syncretism. So many changes or developments can be related to an element from another religion or another subgroup within the same religion that it returns us to an earlier critique of syncretism, "If everything is syncretic, then nothing is syncretic" (Ernst and Stewart 2003, 586). However, what remains valuable in this usage of syncretism is that it reflects the self-assertions of many Sindhi Hindus who consciously choose such blending.

While its usefulness is still somewhat suspect, applying a broader sense of syncretism as conscious blending to an analysis of Sindhi self-representations provides further insights into their different experiences. As noted in the previous chapters, Sindhi Hindus often shifted back and forth between using terms according to their own understandings and the dominant understandings in Lucknow, which led them, at times to represent themselves as blending elements. For example, when Gobind Wadhwani asserted, "We Hindus take everything that is good," thus indicating that their traditions added elements that implicitly belonged to other traditions, he quickly shifted to a Sindhi understanding of the labels by asserting, "but the Sikhs are really Hindus." Although such a correction illustrates the common concern among Sindhi Hindus to avoid representing their practices as a combination of elements of different religions, it still represents a consciousness about blending.

A comparison of this correction with other Sindhi Hindu assertions of conscious blending provides another level of understanding of their experiences. While some in the community expressed concerns about the growing prevalence of North Indian deities and the increasing use of Hindi, at the expense of distinctively Sindhi elements, Sindhi Hindus whom I interviewed did not try to suggest that Hanuman or Hindi were really a part of Sindhi culture, as Gobind Wadhwani did with Sikhs being really Hindu. This contrast illustrates the different value of their Hindu and Sindhi identifications. As their Hindu-ness was questioned and connected them to the powers within the broader society, it received a vigorous defense, even though the central unifier for the community was their regional identification. Moreover, these two identifiers were closely connected. The understanding that Nanak, Sufi *pirs,* and Vishnu were all Hindu and the practices that relate to that understanding have come to represent their regional distinctiveness. Therefore, defending the Hindu-ness of those practices helps maintain both their religious identification and regional distinctiveness, despite the blending of North Indian and Sindhi cultures that many Sindhi Hindus see as necessary for their success in diaspora.

Complexity and Essentialized Labels

The necessity of defending their religious identification as Hindus illustrates some of the limits to the tolerance and inclusivity that many people, including many Sindhis, associate with Hinduism. The responses to Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow suggest that placing an object such as the Guru Granth Sahib, which is commonly recognized as non-Hindu, in the center of a Hindu institution or ashram goes beyond the bounds of acceptable inclusivity. The desire to emphasize inclusivity and tolerance, which many scholars and laypeople see as positive attributes, makes it tempting to accept uncritically the self-representations of many Hindus who identify these traits as essential to Hinduism. However, such an acceptance without careful examination ignores the ideological motives behind such assertions and continues to neglect the experiences of exclusion that communities such as Sindhi Hindus have faced. To acknowledge the complexity within Hinduism and Sindhi experiences specifically, representations of Hinduism need to both reflect the complexity of Hindu inclusivity and address various limits to that inclusive philosophy, both in theory and in practice.

Beyond this specific critique of essentialized images of Hinduism, the discussion of the multiple layers of power and contested boundaries creates

an image of a highly individualized existence that defies any essence to a religion. Since communities and even individuals disagree about the components of their religions and regional cultures and establish a wide range of practices, it might seem that lived religions reflect an atomized existence where each person establishes his/her own practices according to their own needs, understandings, or whims. Reform movements and leaders associated with many religions often bemoan such expressions of individual agency, sometimes even in direct conflict between competing religious sensibilities.[2] Some scholars have also decried the postmodern rejection of an essence for a religion, out of concern that it also leads to an atomized existence where scholars and religious leaders have no basis for speaking.[3]

Although I recognize the appearance of atomization in the recognition of contested definitions and the power of individuals and communities to create their own formations that often incorporate multiple understandings, characterizing Sindhi Hindus as following an atomized approach focuses only on the theoretical side and fails to capture the dynamics within their expressions of agency as living communities. Even as Sindhi Hindus develop individualized groups of practices, these practices place them within a range of community associations. They express their agency, at times, in practices such as Cheti Chand and the collective development of institutions such as the Hari Om Mandir that unite a range of Sindhi Hindus and reinforce their collective identification and sense of community. In fact, in the context of Atlanta, Sindhi Hindus participate in a range of activities at *gurdwaras,* homes, and temples as their own community, without regard for the dominant community in the various institutions that they visit.

Moreover, Sindhi Hindus maintain multiple connections specifically through their relation to contested definitions. While this study has highlighted their sense of identification as a community of Sindhi Hindus and the commonalities and differences among them, the assertions of various Sindhis, such as H. G. Daswani, have also placed Sindhi Hindus in connection with Sindhi Muslims, conceived by Sindhi Hindus as fellow Sufis who have been collectively oppressed by the events of Partition and developments in Pakistan. At the same time, many Sindhi Hindus have expressed a sense of collective identification with Hindus and Indians more generally, though such assertions have faced opposition from other Hindus at times.

From this perspective, Sindhi Hindus are not experiencing their individualized traditions as an atomized existence. Their sometimes idiosyncratic practices connect them to multiple senses of community and identity that are sometimes in conflict, sometimes incomplete, but they are not automatically inferior or problematic because of their multiplicity.

While certainly some Sindhis experience an isolated existence, it would be inaccurate to suggest that an individual's isolation is because of a lack of an essence to Sindhi Hindu traditions or Hinduism more generally. Instead of interpreting this multiplicity as the absence of an essence, we can see this multiplicity as a sign of the vitality and diversity within one ethno-religious community.

As the experiences of Sindhi Hindus illustrate, the postmodern and postcolonial critique of definitions of religion and essentialized religious boundaries open our vision to see the multiple identifications and senses of community, the various commonalities and differences, and the challenges that develop out of contested definitions. While the Sindhi Hindu community did not present the example of religious harmony that I expected to find, they clearly taught me how an assumption of sharp boundaries blinds us to the rich experiences of relationships and conflicts within human existence. For anyone to understand differences, it is imperative to move beyond dominant, often essentialized, definitions to consider the agency of individuals and communities to contest definitions and create their own understandings of their religious and cultural heritage, as well as the challenges that such communities face because of the differences between their understandings and the dominant definitions.

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Appendix: Glossary of Foreign Terms

Adi Granth	see Guru Granth Sahib
Akal Takht	seat of religious authority for Khalsa Sikhs
akhand jyoti	continuously burning flame
akhand path	continuous recitation, specifically a forty-eight hour continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib
Amil	segment of the Sindhi Hindu community who were professionals, originally in the service of the Muslim rulers of Sindh
ananda	bliss
Ardas	a prayer that invokes the gurus of Sikhism
arti	a song of praise or a ritualized offering of light to images of deities, accompanied by a song of praise
Arya Samaj	a Hindu reform movement founded by Dayananda Saraswati
Asa Di Var	a composition by Nanak and Angad, his successor, frequently recited by followers of Nanak and Sikhism
avatar	a deity taking human form, literally, coming down
Ayodhya	city in Uttar Pradesh, India, where some Hindus want to rebuild a temple to Ram that they claim a Mughal emperor replaced with a mosque
baqa-ba-Allah	merging with god, commonly used by Sufis
barakat	spiritual power of the body or shrine of a sacred figure
bhagat	a devotee, variant of bhakta frequently used in the Guru Granth Sahib
Bhagavad Gita	text detailing Krishna's conversation with Arjuna about duty and Krishna's place as the Supreme Form of the divine
bhagavan	Lord, god
Bhaiband	segment of the Sindhi Hindu community who were typically merchants or moneylenders
bhajan	devotional songs, usually associated with Hindu deities
bhakta	a devotee
bhakti	devotion
bharana	tray of offerings to Jhule Lal, usually consisting of fruits, nuts, and dough formed into oil lamps

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	political party in India associated with Hindu Nationalist ideology
"Dāma Dām Mast Qalandar"	devotional song associated with Lal Shahbaz Qalandar that Sindhi Hindus also relate to Jhule Lal
dargah	Sufi shrine, usually including the grave of a saint, also termed *mazar*
darshan	exchange of sight between devotee and image of a deity
Dasam Granth	a compilation of Gobind Singh's poetry
dervish	a mystic, usually associated with Sufism
dharma	way, duty, religion
dharmshala	guesthouse for travelers
divan	platform, similar to a bed, on which musicians sit
diya	small lamps, typically made of clay
fakir	a mystic, usually associated with Sufism
fana-fi-Allah	annihilation of the self by absorption into god, commonly used by Sufis
fana-fi-al-Rasoul	annihilation of the self by absorption into the prophet, commonly used by Sufis
fana-fi-al-Sheikh	annihilation of the self by absorption in the murshid, commonly used by Sufis
ghazal	poem of a certain meter, usually associated with Sufis
Gobind Singh	tenth guru in the Sikh lineage who, according to tradition, established the Khalsa in 1699
granthi	reader of the sacred texts in public gatherings
gurdwara	religious institution housing the Guru Granth Sahib
guru	teacher, usually someone with deep spiritual insight
Guru Granth Sahib	central text in Sikh traditions, which contains the poetry of the first five gurus in the Sikh lineage as well as the poetry of several Hindu and Muslim saints, also known as the Adi Granth
hadith	traditions and sayings of Muhammad
halva	an Indian sweet made from butter, flour, and sugar that is traditionally offered to the Guru Granth Sahib
Harmandir	1. a central shrine for the Sikh community, located in Amritsar, Punjab, also known as the Golden Temple 2. original name that Sindhis in Lucknow gave to their institution housing the Guru Granth Sahib

havan	ritual involving a fire altar and Vedic slokas
iftar	gatherings to break the daily fast of Ramadan
Ik-Om-Kar	an Om and numeral one in Gurmukhi calligraphy, usually associated with Sikhism
jalebi	an Indian sweet
Janmasthami	birthday of Krishna
Japji	opening section of the Guru Granth Sahib, frequently recited by followers of Nanak and Sikhs
jati	subcaste
"Jaya Jagadīsh Hare"	devotional song commonly sung during arti to praise the Lord of the Universe
Jhule Lal	Sindhi Hindu deity associated with water
kalam	discourse, speech, typically referring to that of a Sufi master
kara prasad	food, usually *halva*, that has been offered to the Guru Granth Sahib
Khalsa	literally the Pure, Sikhs who have taken initiation according to traditions associated with Gobind Singh
khanda	a double-edged sword with two daggers encircling it, usually associated with Sikh traditions
kirtan	devotional songs
kurta	knee length shirt, traditionally worn by men in South Asia
langar	communal meal, often associated with Sikh traditions of casteless dining
lanvan	wedding ceremony involving circumambulating the Guru Granth Sahib
mahotsav	literally major festival, usually referring to a temple or deity's festival
mandir	temple
mazar	Sufi shrine, usually including the grave of a saint, also termed *dargah*
mela	festival
Muharram	festival commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad
murshid	spiritual teacher
murti	sculpture, usually referring to an image of a deity, literally body
Musa	Arabic rendering of Moses
namaz	Islamic prayers
Nanak	the first guru in the Sikh lineage
Nanakpanthi	followers of Nanak, a subtradition commonly associated with Sikhism that emphasizes the first guru
nirakar	without form, formless
nirakar ishvar	formless god
Nirmalas	a sect associated with Sikhism generally but identified as heterodox by Khalsa Sikhs

panj kakke	five K's, the five outward symbols of Khalsa Sikh identity, uncut hair, comb, steel bracelet, dagger, and a specific style of undergarments
panth	sect, community, way as in the practices of a religious community
path	continuous reading of a sacred text
pir	a Sufi master
pranayama	breath control
prasad	sanctified items that the divine graciously returns to the devotee
puja	ritualized worship, usually related to Hinduism
qalandar	Sufi figure, *pir*
qāzī	Muslim jurist
Qutab Ali Shah	Sindhi Sufi *pir* in the Jahaniyan lineage
Ramcharitmanas	Tusli Das's Hindi version of the Ramayana, the story of Ram and Sita
Ramnaumi	birthday of Ram
Rashtriya Swayamsevak	Hindu nationalist organization
Sangh (RSS) Rehrasi	set of compositions by gurus in the Sikh lineage, typically recited in the evenings
Sachal Sarmast	a Sindhi Sufi Muslim famous for his poetry, born as Abd al-Wahab
sakar ishvar	gods with shape
samadhi	shrine commemorating the cremation or burial, usually of a holy figure
samaj	society
sanatan dharma	eternal religion, usually designating traditional Hinduism in contrast to Hindu reform movements
sant	pious, virtuous one, often related to North Indian *sant* movements.
satguru	true guru or teacher
satsang	gathering of the true ones (the devotees) for worship and edification
seva	service
shahnai	traditional double-reed instrument
Shahenshah	a Sindhi Sufi whose followers have established Sufidar, a center in Chennai, India
Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC)	Committee elected by Sikhs to legally manage gurdwaras in certain areas

shishya	disciple
Sindhu River	major river running through Sindh that is also the namesake for the region, now called the Indus River
sloka	verse
Sukhmani Sahib	collection of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, frequently recited by followers of Nanak and Sikhs
Tijri	a festival when wives fast to request health for their husbands
tikana	Sindhi term for a temple that includes the Guru Granth Sahib
tilak	sectarian mark placed on the forehead of a devotee
upanayan	ceremonial investiture of the sacred thread
Upanishads	philosophical texts, considered the concluding components of the Vedic corpus
urs	death anniversary of a spiritual figure, usually a Sufi master
Vachan Sahib	recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib
vahana	animal mount
"vāhiguru"	phrase commonly used among Sikhs to refer to the divine, lit., splendid guru; commonly transliterated as "Waheguru" also
varshi	death anniversary
Vedas	ancient texts, especially referring to collections of Sanskrit hymns that many define as the basis for Hinduism
Vidhan Sabha	provincial legislature
Wahdat-al-Wujud	Unity of Being, a concept within some understandings of Islam
zamindar	landholder who often served as local governing official

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Notes

Introduction: Differing Understandings

1. Several scholars have suggested revised understandings of syncretism that include the contrast between syncretism as a strategy of blending and anti-syncretism as a strategy of boundary maintenance (Shaw and Stewart 1994; Kraft 2002, 149).

1 Placing Sindhis

1. Lari 1994, 30, 41. See also Bosworth 1963; Maclean 1989.
2. See, for example, Knott 1998, 110–114.
3. For example, *Times of India* 2001a, 1.

2 Debating Institutions

1. This account combines my own understanding of this discourse with the explanations that two interviewees gave me. Out of the various interviewees whom I asked to assist me in translating this Sindhi portion of the satsang, only two, H. G. Daswani and Lila Advani, were particularly helpful in translating the Sindhi.
2. For the convenience of analysis, I focus in this chapter on Sindhi institutions, variously called temples, gurdwaras, and prayer halls, that Sindhis have organized as a community. I distinguish these institutions from centers that relate to specific guru movements because they have a different structure of authority. I will address guru movements and their centers in the following chapter.
3. My analysis of the ritualized activities draws especially on the theoretical work of Richard Schechner's conception of the restoration of behaviors and Catherine Bell's discussion of ritual inscription and resistance (Schechner 1985, 35–55; Bell 1992).

4. I am indebted to the insights of Catherine Asher for this connection.
5. For the Hari Om Mandir version, Dada Chelaram Ashram n.d., 81–82. For Khalsa Sikh versions, Nikky Guninder Singh, trans. 1995, 139–141; Sangat Singh, trans. 1987, 122–125; Sidhu 2000.
6. For a fuller discussion of this tension, see O'Flaherty 1987.
7. For a fuller discussion of the complex dynamics of identifications in South Asia, see Gottschalk 2000.

3 Defining Movements

1. While Sindhis variously referred to these leaders as Sufis, gurus, *murshids, sants*, and so on, for simplicity and consistency, I will use the term guru for these figures generally, inserting other terms when they reflect a specific statement in a particular context.
2. Punshi 1985, 67, capitalization in original, bracketed definition added.
3. Punshi 1985, 2–3, 5, italics added.
4. For example, my Hindu neighbors in Lucknow strongly rejected any association of those terms with Hindu deities.
5. For details of the life story of T. L. Vaswani, consult H. P. Vaswani 1975.
6. For more about J. P. Vaswani's life, see Kumari, Sampath, and Gidwani 1998.

4 Presenting Sacred Figures

1. For an interesting discussion of the significations of the tunic in India, see Wagoner 1996, 851–880.

6 Personalizing Traditions

Another version of the first portion of this chapter appeared as "Challenging Definitions: Human Agency, Diverse Religious Practices and the Problems of Boundaries." *Numen* 54:1 (2007): 1–27, published by Brill. Their permission to use this material is appreciated.

1. My analysis draws on the theoretical assertions of ritual inscription in the work of Catherine Bell (1992, 94–98, 104–107) and Gavin Flood (2004, 213–215).
2. Juergensmeyer discusses the debate within Radhasoami communities over their identification as Hindu, Sikh, or a separate religion (1991, 6). However, the devotion of Shankar's mother to the movement that has Hindu ties was an important component of his description of her.

Conclusion: Understanding Differences

1. See, for example, Marriott 1992.
2. Events in Punjab in May 2007 related to the conflict between the Dera Saucha Sauda and the Akali Sikhs are a prime example of this rejection of alternative forms. Mudgal 2007.
3. See Brian K. Smith (2000) and Jacob Neusner (1995) for examples of this issue concerning post-modern discussions of religion.

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* designates pseudonyms assigned to individuals who shared personal information. Page numbers in **bold** refer to the figures in the text.